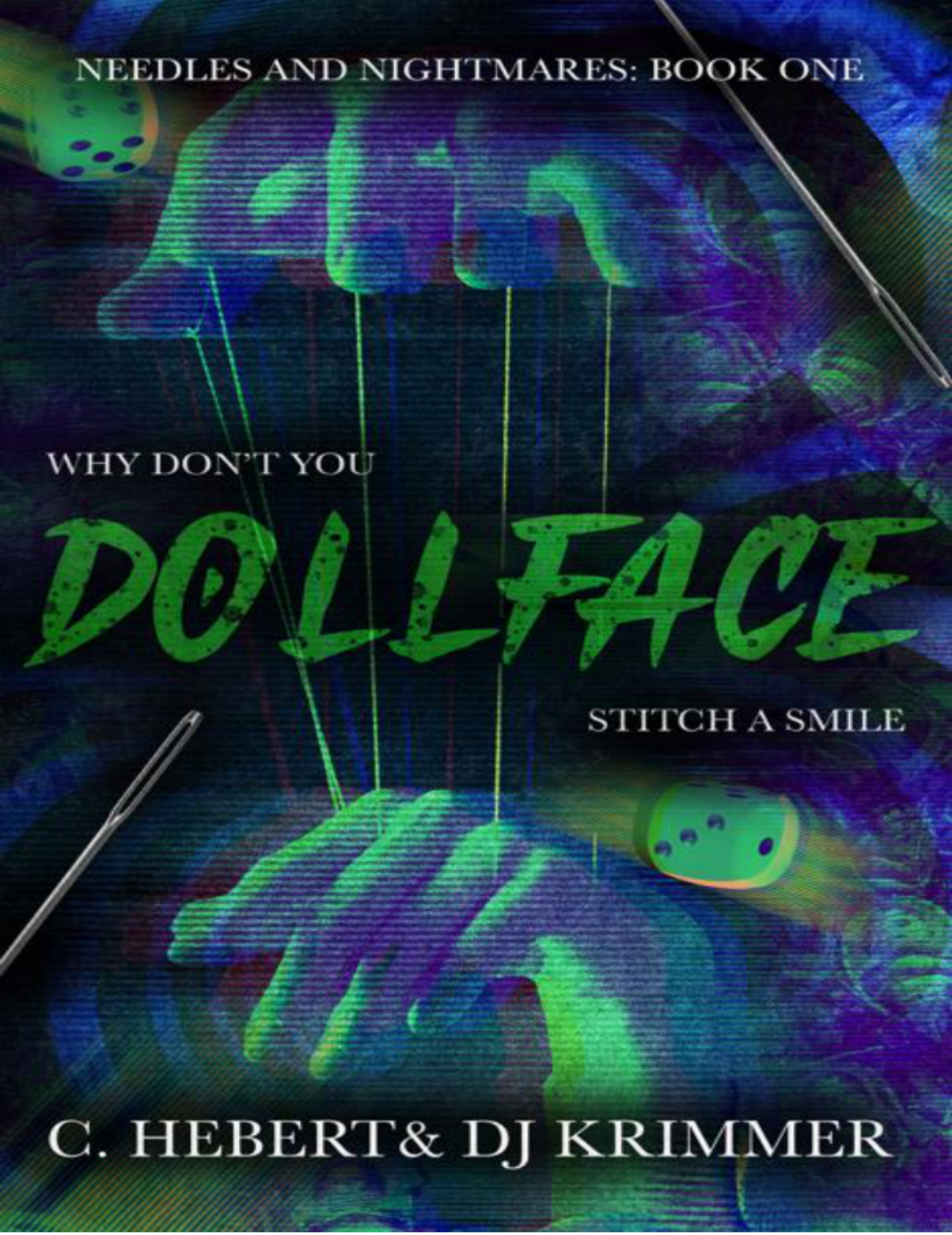
NEEDLES AND NIGHTMARES: BOOK ONE
WHY DON'T YOU
DOLLFACE
STITCH A SMILE
C. HEBERT& DJ KRIMMER

Dollface

Needles and Nightmares

Book One

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Blurb

Amid the suffocating embrace of night,
I stumble upon him, a beacon of light.
The Boogeyman, a seductive terror,
Whispers haunting promises, cruel and fair.
Eyes that glint with otherworldly fire,
In his grasp, I'm consumed by dark desire.
A love twisted and sickeningly sweet,
Tangled in the depths of darkness, where nightmares meet.
Should I trust my button eyes,
Or should I doubt them and follow my Firefly?

In this town we claim as home,
Where shadows shift and creations roam,
Everyone bows with a trembling hand,
To the rule of the Boogeyman.

For everyone who looked at that burlap sack and snake tongue and thought
“Daddy…”
Don’t worry, we got you.

Reader Caution

This Book Contains The Following Triggers:

Mental Abuse, Physical Abuse, Attempted Sexual Assault, Torture, Blood, Biting, Attempted Murder, Murder, Death, Detailed Sexual Scenes, Anxiety, Mention of Child Abduction and Death, Kidnapping, Unprotected Sex, Stalking, Somnophilia, Emotional Abuse, Needles, Sewing of Flesh, Mention of Rape, Sexual Abuse, Trauma, Profanity, Sexual Harassment, Slut Shaming, Violence, Dubious Consent, Desecration of a Corpse, Masturbation, Mention of Blood Orgies, Verbal Abuse, Taxidermy, Light Bondage, Virgin FMC, Sodomy, Rough Sexual Interactions, Removal of Eyes, Emotional Addiction, Intrusive Thoughts, PTSD Characteristics, Sex Addiction, Gambling, Body Modifications, Toxic Relationships, Body Horror, Dead Bodies, Emotional Scars, Emotional Trauma, Attempted Strangulation, Abuse of a Deceased Animal, Sexual Manipulation, Emotional Manipulation, Lying, Shared Trauma, Panic Attacks, and a Cliff Hanger Ending.

POEM 1

Even though I am made from her design,
I feel as if I am a pure mistake.
I have no eyes and only mishap hair,
My heart is empty and full of despair.
Forever lost in the shadows of dreams,
I see and feel only that of my name.

Prologue

BOOGEYMAN

Shall we play a game?

It feels as though an eternity has passed, and still, I can feel the pull of her sick, seductive question, taunting me with its allure. The need to be free mixes with my morbid curiosity and the desire to play, all fighting a war with my better judgment. I should've said no. I should've killed her then or died trying. I should've found a different way out. But then again, how could I resist? The thrill and risk of a game is like a drug, addicting, promising the possibility of winning the ultimate prize. Yet still, deep down, I know there would only be one outcome for this game. The winner has already been chosen, my fate forever sealed.

I'm man enough to accept the rush of excitement I felt coursing through me as the Spinster made her proposition, despite knowing in my gut the price that comes with playing her games. My chest clenched as I rolled my dice, and with bated breath, I watched as my red cubes tumbled across the ground, revealing snake eyes—my worst nightmare. I should've known better than to tempt fate, to tempt her, but it was too late to turn back. And so, the twisted dance between the Spinster and myself began.

The rules are simple enough: survive this nightmarish purgatory she crafted and find my way back to Dreadmoor, where I can then be free to unravel her web and take over as leader. Or, in my case, destroy it and piss on the remnants. The time has come to dethrone that bitch of a tyrant who ruled her world like a god, creating and weaving endless evil, leaving nothing but suffering in her wake. I won't go there to take it over; no, I will erase Dreadmoor from existence, ensuring her reign of terror could never be awakened again.

I mean, how hard could overthrowing a god and destroying a universe be?

Little did I know, this new game would prove to be the biggest challenge of my life. Every step forward feels like I'm wading through mud, challenged by her morbid creations, her killer Nightmares, her secret spies. Each new obstacle is a seemingly insurmountable mountain. But still, I stay headstrong, determined to succeed, to win

her game, to claim what is rightfully mine.

“I don't understand why you always take the eyes.” The words spill from Charisma's lips with a grimace, their skeletal paint shifting on their face as they scrunch their sharp, angular features in disgust. They tower over the dead body, their eyes fixed on the empty sockets with a mix of revulsion and morbid fascination. The lilac glow of their irises seem to intensify in the darkness as they contemplate the scene before them.

Havoc stands at their side, her fluorescent green hair held high in two buns, matching braids framing her eerily painted face. She tucks a braid behind her delicate ear while humming to herself. Despite the grotesque sight, she radiates joy and peace. Which makes sense, because Havoc, like her name might suggest, is a fucking psychopath.

"Havoc thinks it's poetic," she hums softly, her voice reminding me of an eerie child—higher pitched but soft, with an eerie, whimsical tone. It’s fucking creepy, especially at times like this, where she’s smiling at the dead body with a look that carries a hint of admiration for the work I’ve done. "He's making a statement. Take the window and close the door." Havoc’s haunting, chittering giggle fills the midnight air alongside her nonsense. Like I said, psychopath.

Sullen snorts loudly from where he leans his slim frame against the old wagon, arms crossed over his chest as his devil-like tail flicks in irritation. "More like a cry for attention," he mocks, earning an eye roll from me beneath my mask. "Mommy didn't love me, so I must pluck out the eyes of all her creations who dare cross me." As Sullen continues his inane mocking, I push off the tree and stride toward them, drawing my blade as I move.

"Keep talking, little man," I grumble, pointing the blade threateningly toward him, my body towering over his thin frame. "And your skinny ass is next." My gaze falls on the dead body lying at our feet as Havoc drags her long, stained tongue up the dead man's face in a grotesque display. She smacks her lips together, the noise shooting a wave of irritation through me. Blood trails from the corners of her painted face before she shudders in pleasure, causing even me to grimace in disgust.

“Definitely a tainted soul, tainted and toxic, trapped in fear. Poor lost souls; they don’t know any better.”

“Don’t know any better?” I hiss, pulling up the bottom of my faded burlap mask, and taking a brief reprieve from the suffocating heat. The cool night air dances across my sweat-drenched face before I quickly cover up again, ensuring I’m not spotted by unwanted eyes. “She's sending them to kill me—her little creations, pawns in her never-ending game. They know exactly what they’re doing.”

Charisma arches a brow before clicking their tongue in annoyance

and shaking their head, the iridescent glitter across their cheeks sparkling in the moonlight. “They aren’t like you, boss. They weren’t given free will. My question is, why would *she* keep sending them when she knows you're losing her game?” My sneer is hidden behind my mask as I rotate my knife and hurl it at them. It narrowly misses their eye, embedding itself in a nearby tree trunk.

“I am *not* losing her game,” I growl, marching over to retrieve the knife from the bark with a huff. “I'm just biding my time until I can find the fucking key to get out of here and strike back.” Even as the words leave my mouth, I know they’re hollow and meaningless. The three psychotic fuckers around me break into a laughing fit at my pathetic excuse. These brats are the only ones in this forsaken nightmare of a world who haven't cowered in fear of me, who haven't turned away in disgust or betrayed me. Instead, they embrace my flaws, worship me as though I’m their god... sort of. They follow me around like lost souls. They seem to slither around this nightmare, entertaining themselves with our game. And yet, I despise them more than anything; I wish they would find someone else to bother. I have no use for this makeshift band of misfits they call companions. My sole objective is to escape from this hellish world and return to Dreadmoor, where I will make the bitch pay for all her sins. I’ll tear her down from her throne of souls and web of lies and watch as she chokes on her own eyes, which I will rip from their sockets and force down her throat.

“I’m going back,” I snarl, my voice dripping with menace as I turn to leave. “Dispose of him when you’re done. Havoc, no dead body orgies with this one! Dispose of him and get back to the tree house,” I warn, my eyes flashing dangerously as I ignore her groans of displeasure and nonsensical mumblings.

In the woods, I take a moment to lift my mask again and breathe, trying to rid myself of the ever-present stench of death and decay. I don’t lift it high, but it’s enough that I can see the bottom of the mask starting to glow green—another one of the Spinster’s sick games. Covered in permanent glowing ink, the never-ending designs inked into my flesh, purposefully making my skin ignite beneath the moonlight. I’m a beacon for her twisted creations to find me in the eternal darkness. The fluorescent hues of yellow, blue, pink, and green scream louder than I ever could, making it impossible for me to hunt in the nearly endless night of this world. That is, until I don my disguise, transforming me into *him. The Boogeyman*, feared by children and adults alike for his insatiable hunger for little ones who stray too far from safety.

The spooky stories are fucking bullshit. I despise kids.

I stop walking as an uncomfortable heaviness slowly creeps into

me. Shaking my head, as though the simple motion is all it takes to rid me of centuries old memories, I start up my pace again. I *don't* like kids. Actually, scratch that—I despise everyone and everything. And while I'll kill anything or anyone that crosses my path if that's what fate's roll lands on, I have no interest in seeking out victims on my own—especially not screaming, snotty, useless children. The three grown brats that won't leave me alone are childish enough for me to deal with, the last thing I need is to deal with more.

As I step over the threshold into my decrepit, rotting tree house, I immediately rid myself of the heavy, tan burlap mask concealing my identity. With a careless toss, it lands on the floor in a crumpled heap. I follow with the matching bodysuit, shedding it like a second skin as the scratchy, faded material glides down my body and joins its counterpart in the corner of the room. My feet navigate through the darkness with practiced ease, not needing any light to guide me through the maze-like layout of my main floor. It took me weeks to memorize every twist and turn in the shadows, but it's necessary for my safety. The last thing I want is for one of Spinster's little creations or nightmares to catch sight of my glowing skin and lead them straight to my home.

"Ow! Fucking damnit!" I spit out as my foot collides with something hard—something that shouldn't be there. I don't know what it is, but I do know Charisma and Sullen are entirely to blame and will be on the receiving end of my punishment tomorrow.

I descend to the lower level, and a sense of calm washes over me as a rainbow of glowing color fades to life and I'm immersed in my bioluminescent sanctuary. A small smirk tugs at my lips as I watch a glowing dragonfly land delicately on my brightly lit skin, matching the ink, before fluttering away. This is my haven, my personal refuge within the confines of my home. Here, I can let down my guard and be myself, in my own skin, and forget both the worlds outside my door.

The glowing creatures scurry around me, their soft light casting a mesmerizing glow on the walls. It pulls at the corners of my typically downturned lips, a rare occurrence for someone who hates almost everyone—though hate might be too strong of a word. There's a clear distinction between indifference and hatred, and while I may not care for most people, there are only a select few whom I truly despise. Like the Spinster. Hatred requires emotion, energy, obsession—much like how I'd imagine love to feel. Not that I'd know; love has never been a desire or want for me. Perhaps that's something I should be grateful for. Love appears to be nothing but chaos and destruction. In all my years here and in Dreadmoor, I have witnessed it happen time and time again, each instance ending with one person left broken beyond

repair. Not even the Spinster with her needle and thread could mend those shattered hearts. So yes, I understand the science behind "love," but I don't feel it, and I have no desire to even attempt to do so.

A small smile spreads across my face as a glowing yellow caterpillar scurries across my blue and green inked arm toward my fingers. I pull the fluorescent critter closer to my face, letting out a quiet chuckle as it wiggles in my palm, changing from yellow to blue and then back. "You're running late on your cocooning stage, little guy," I say softly before setting it gently on a nearby leaf. “No need to try so hard to talk to me just yet. We’ll have our chats soon.” Much like the Spinster has her spies, I have mine. Unfortunately, my reach doesn’t go beyond this world, not like hers, but my bugs help to keep me aware of trouble—like the creation from tonight.

Reaching my hand into my pants pocket, I pull out the bloodied pair of black button eyes I ripped from the creation’s eye sockets. I smirk, grabbing a jar off my shelf of collections—most are full of button eyes, and I drop the pair into an open one.

“Welcome home.” I chuckle while fighting the stiffness I feel growing in my pants. It’s nothing for me to come down here and pleasure myself to my trophies. It’s like an extra “fuck you” to the Spinster. But tonight, I have a heaviness weighing on me. Something is changing in the air. I don’t know what it is, but it’s stealing my focus.

Making my way through my room, I stuff my hand back into my pocket, gripping a pair of dice. They aren’t *my* dice. No, I lost those in my last round with Spinster. But what is a gambler without his dice? So, I found this pair of glowing green ones. I’m not a fan, but they’ll do until I have my set back in my grasp. With a flick of my wrist, the green cubes roll and bounce across the table. My scowl deepens as they land on a one and a three. Apparently, I *won’t* be delivering an ass beating to the shit stains once they return.

Chapter 1

Blue

Alone...
Lost in sadness,
Made from scraps and mishaps.
A silly mistake left to be...
Alone

"Move!" I whisper while frantically shoving the small, whimpering child toward the open portal with all my strength. "You must return to your world and destroy the door! This is not the magical world you think it is. It's a living hell, and if you don't leave now, she'll destroy you! You need to forget this place ever existed!" I groan, trying to force the child through as he sobs, clinging onto me with his small, desperate arms. I can feel the darkness of this cursed realm closing in around us, chilling the air and weighing me down with its despair.

Tears stream down his face as he clings desperately to my stomach, frightened and unsure of what to do. I hold him tightly, feeling the weight of guilt and regret crushing me. This tiny human, so innocent and pure, should've never been lured into my dark world like so many before him. Those wretched toys, bringing these souls here to feed our Creator's insatiable hunger. I can't stand by and witness another fallen soul. I need to save him. I knew upon his arrival that his time was very limited. The Creator hasn't had a new child in many years, and she's starving. It took everything in me to break free from my cage so I could return him to his rightful world.

The screech of my Creator echoes through the night sky, a crackle of lightning illuminating the skies—my signal that time is running out. I have to make him leave and flee for my own survival before it's too late. Hell, it may already be too late for me. Doing this is the ultimate betrayal, punishable by only the most gruesome of deaths.

"Remember, you must break the door once you've reached your room. Do not hesitate," I repeat urgently as I shove him through the door, slamming it shut behind him with a resounding thud. My hair lashes against my face in wild tangles as my Creator's presence grows

closer, sending shivers of fear down my spine. With trembling hands, I twist the doorknob, and relief fills me when I'm met with resistance. The glowing orb surrounding the door dissipates. *Good boy*. He's finally home, and with the bridge connecting his world to ours destroyed, he will forever be sealed off and safe from her clutches.

"You wretched rag!" A bloodcurdling scream pierces through the trees, sending me hurtling into a nearby tree with bone-crunching force. My head spins as I struggle to regain my bearings, but all I can see is a hazy blur of gray in the surrounding darkness. Suddenly, a vice-like grip seizes my throat, cold, skeletal, needle-like fingers curling around my neck as they slam me against the once peaceful tree that held the portal. The familiar scent of my Creator's putrid breath fills my nostrils as she hisses a guttural warning in my ear.

"This is the last time," she growls. "I spared you last time because you were young and new, you pathetic waste of parts! Now, I shall fling you into the depths of the Nightmare and let the Boogeyman tear you apart." My eyes widen with terror as a wave of dread washes over me. I knew what my fate would be, but hearing it spoken is heart-stopping.

"Please," I croak, my voice barely audible through her surprisingly strong grip. "I-I beg of you." My plea is desperate as fear and anxiety courses through me. The Boogeyman is the devil of our world and Nightmare is the hell he lords over. Being sentenced to him is a fate worse than death.

"Silence!" Her roar hushes my cries. "I warned you to stop destroying my portals!" she bellows, throwing me to the ground with a force that knocks the air from my lungs. I brace myself for another vicious blow, but it never comes. Instead, the ground beneath my body begins to dissolve, my limbs quickly sinking into fading sand, my stomach dropping as I fall into a dark vortex. I try to scream, to claw at the surface and save myself, but it's too late.

As I fall, I get my first glimpse of my Creator as she stares back at me, her shiny black buttons flickering while her smile curls into something sinister. "Let's see you stop me now, you worthless ragdoll." As her insult hits my heart, my body is pulled into the shadows, the world spinning into a dark abyss as I drown in the sound of my screams, until it all collides into utter silence met with absolute darkness.

"OHHH, aren't you a pretty little dolly?" The eerie, whispered voice

pierces my subconsciousness, jolting it back to awareness. I scamper backwards—as a bright light burns my eyes, causing me to shield them with my arm while trying to make out the figure. “Pretty plaything, lost and sad.”

"W-who's there?" I sputter out before groaning as the pain in my head settles from the impact. “Answer me!” I cry out with all the fake confidence my small, broken, sore body can muster. I just hope it’s coming off as intimidating, though with the intense light obscuring any details, I could be talking to a rock for all I know. *That would one hundred percent be my luck.*

“Havoc,” the voice replies. Hands grip my arms, forcing me to my wobbling feet.

“Yes, you are creating a bit of it,” I mutter. The stranger seems delighted by my statement, the sound of her laughter and squeals echoing around me.

“Havoc’s name is Havoc. What’s yours?” My vision focuses as I stare back at the most unique looking creature. No, not a creature—a person. Her hair is gathered into two buns atop her head, her face hidden behind glowing paint resembling that of a menacing clown, smeared and imperfect, eerie yet beautiful. She’s dressed in a costume of sorts, also like that of a clown, her dark arms and legs fully exposed. My face twists in curiosity and fear as I realize her eyes are different; one is that of a human, but the other... It’s like mine—a shiny, roughly stitched button.

“Dolly hasn’t answered Havoc,” she hisses, though I sense more amusement in her whisper than hostility.

“Blue,” I reply slowly. *Why is she talking that way?* She’s quiet for a moment before chuckling.

“Yes, you are.”

“I’m what?” My head tilts, perplexed by her words.

“Blue,” she whispers, popping up closer into my personal space.

“Ah!” I scream while stumbling back over my platform shoes, causing this Havoc woman to giggle.

“Why are you screaming? You can’t be scared of Havoc.” Cocking her head to one side, she points her finger at herself. “Who will be the match if you flee?”

“I can barely see you and you just... appeared!” I snap while trying to get my bearings. “Wait, match? What match?”

“Aren't toys supposed to have good eyesight?” She taps her button eye, grinning. The insulting term hits me, and I feel the heat rising up my neck.

“Don’t call me that!” I snap while trying to keep my anger down. I hate being referred to as a toy. I know I’m not human, but I’m not a *toy* either. Those vile creatures are the ones the Creator sets loose into

the human's world to lure the precious children to Dreadmoor, and I refuse to be classified as one of them. No, I am not a toy, but not fully a creation either. I'm the monstrosity in between; cut me and I bleed, I breathe air, and I have a beating heart. I have my own thoughts, wants, needs, but... my Creator is still able to control me. It's a terrible life, wanting to be free, wanting to think for myself, act of my own accord but having that little niggling in the back of my head, my Creator and her whispers reminding me who I belong to and who I serve.

I ball my fist at my sides as I square my stance, "The Creator equips all her creations with exceptional eyesight. as you should know with your doll eye," I state, gesturing to her singular button eye. Havoc cocks her head to the side before letting out a terrifying cackle, causing me to jump.

"Not a doll, silly! Havoc stole it." She slithers her tongue. The nail of her finger begins to tap against the button, humming lightly before skipping away behind a tree. I watch, wondering what she's doing. She returns, grunting while dragging a...

"What is that?" I cry out in horror as she drops the body between us.

"It's a man," she states boredly. "One of yours, yes." I notice the wretched state of the man, shaking my head as I begin to back away.

"Is... Is he dead?" Havoc giggles as her sharpened smile brightens.

"Of course! The Boogeyman doesn't half-ass anything." I feel my heart pound at his name.

"T-the... Boogeyman? You know him?"

"He lives here, little dolly." Havoc grabs a handful of the dead man's organs, tossing them into the air like confetti as she twirls beneath the bloody mess. "We all do. Nightmare is our home, watched by eyes of black and always night." She stops, giggling as she turns and begins to walk away. "He's Havoc's boss man. One of an unknown pair."

I stumble over the messy scene she left behind, catching the missing button eyes of the creation while trying to keep up with her oddly graceful long strides. "You work for him? The Boogeyman? Is it true what they say?"

Havoc halts her movements, and her lips twist to the side as she cocks her head.

"What they say?" she repeats curiously. "What do they say?"

"Uhm..." My throat feels tight and dry, prickles dancing over the skin of my neck as Havoc slides closer to me, her scent invading my senses. She smells like a ghostly meringue, frightening and sweet. "They say he's the shadow on the night's moon, that when he locks eyes with you, your fate is sealed."

Havoc snaps her fingers as I jolt, gasping at the sudden movement. “Just like that?” she asks, her face twisting into an amused grin as I nod.

“He fills your dreams with a fright so dark that your soul leaves your body and wanders into night.” Havoc blinks once, twice before throwing her head back and releasing a cackle I feel in my bones.

“Oh yeah,” she giggles. “Boss man is *so* scary. Havoc shakes in her boots at the mere thought of him.” She snorts, lifting her foot as she wobbles her leg. “Boss is losing,” she sings while turning around, walking away. Her words make no sense. I run to keep up to her as she heads to the tree line of a thick, dark forest.

“Are you going back to him?” I ask, almost frantically as I hear the screech of feral creations in the distance.

“Of course, Havoc’s not staying here to encounter the Nightmares.” She huffs, gesturing to the night air, followed immediately by a distant snarl.

“Take me with you,” I beg. “Please, don’t leave me here in—” I glance around, spying the beaming moon above. I’m not in Dreadmoor anymore. I truly have been sent to Nightmare, a second world created solely for the purpose of torturing misbehaved creations, housing the bloodthirsty Nightmares, and tormenting the souls of the damned. My Creator warned me of this outcome, but I didn’t listen... couldn’t. And now, I’m lost in the never-ending night of this world.

“No can do–” Havoc scowls as she stares at nothing next to her, mumbling something. “No! Havoc won't disobey orders tonight! Because! Boss man said no more bodies in the tree house. Especially not toys. Havoc takes her, she dies.”

“Wait, what?” Another screech fills the cool air, and I know whatever it is, is nearing us and fast. “If I join you, he’ll kill me?”

“Havoc tried before, to bring... friends over to Boss’ place. It gets lonely with just Sullen and Charisma. They don’t enjoy Havoc’s... tastes. And Boss gets grumpy being alone, silly bug, he sees nothing.” She trails off before shaking her head. “No, Blue must find her own place here in Nightmare. Be a good dolly,” she coos, patting me on top of my head. “Stay away from the woods; they lead to your fate. Also, don’t touch the body Havoc left. He’ll turn to mush. Havoc hates mush... messy things.” Havoc smiles, her sharp white teeth almost glowing as she fades into the darkness of the haunting woods. “Until the next game.”

“Havoc, wait!” I call, but the sound of the approaching screeches grows, frightening me. I need to hide, to find my place, as Havoc said. *What did she mean about the woods? That they would lead to my fate? And what game?*

I waste no time as I begin to race away from the woods in search

of a place to hide. A place to call home, as I'm doomed to remain here forever—discarded and forgotten, my punishment for defying my creator. *Way to go, Blue.*

MY BUTTON EYES STRAIN, still struggling to adjust to the unnatural and consistent darkness of Nightmare. Despite the alluring beauty of the full moon, its constant presence is unnerving, creating dancing shadows across the isolated grayscale world. Various abandoned buildings and dead trees perched from the dry earth as the small cursed world wrapped around, bleeding into the thick, haunted forest into which the strange Havoc disappeared. I scan the many homes and buildings in disrepair, the chipped paint of the exteriors peeling and flaking onto the ground like snow as broken shutters and unhinged doors creak in the faint breeze. Shadows and dark figures move behind the dusty windows of the structures, reminding me that I'm in fact not alone out here in this desolated nightmare, but instead, one of the many frightening beings cast into this exile.

I quickly shuffle past the buildings, my spine tingling from the uneasiness of being watched. As I continue further from the woods and lingering homes, I stumble across an old wooden sign growing from a single dirt path and read the weathered words aloud: "Dead On Arrival Furs and Taxidermy." An entire place dedicated to two of my favorite things: sewing and dead things. *What a peculiar place to find out here.* With my interest piqued, I honestly can't help but feel a little rush of excitement over the possibility of this being my new home.

Without further thought, I follow the overgrown dirt path and trample up a steep hill, the heavy soles of my platform shoes dragging in the dirt, until a large Victorian home slowly comes into view. It's old and antique, withered by the darkness of this world but still frozen in its beauty, encircled by large dead trees that loom and twist across the top of the house, encasing it in its own little world. I step closer, gasping as I take in the ambience of it all. Something about the home feels serene. The front door gently swings open, inviting me inside as if it was alive and welcoming me. My swallow is audible, and I touch my lips anxiously before stepping onto the steps of the wooden porch, the sounds of it creaking as I approach the doorway. I stare into the darkness, listening for any sign of life inside, hearing only the sound of my rapidly beating heart. Screeches echo in the distance, startling me and immediately reminding me of why I'm here, searching for a place of my own.

“I’ll take my chances of finding someone inside over facing whatever that is!” I whisper loudly, scuttling through the opened door. It quickly closes behind me as I gasp. The world falls into a calming silence as my sight adjusts to the darkness, observing the interior of the abandoned place. It’s breathtaking, the inside simple but pleasant, filled with old Victorian furniture covered in layers of cobwebs. The walls are chipped and weathered, plastered with numerous frames. I glance closer, realizing that within each bulky frame hangs a single bug, dead and pinned prisoner within its glassy tomb. I step down the long hall, observing each frame closely as my fingers glide across the dusty glass. The bugs are mesmerizing, the wings and bodies all unique and frozen in time, preserving their eternal beauty. The mini exhibitions of insects carry across the wall and throughout the home. The hall dissolves into a large room, filled with more framed wonders and grand furniture. Stuffed creatures of all shapes and sizes are positioned perfectly around the room, their stiff postures and beady eyes welcoming me. My hand grazes along each critter, feeling their fur as I notice their eyes have been replaced with buttons, sewn perfectly into place. *More creations, just like me.* It warms me to be among other creations, even if they’re dead and stuffed, used as pure decorations. *At least they have a purpose*. I look around the spacious room, realizing that this place has been abandoned, all these creatures left unattended to. “I will care for you,” I whisper softly.

After dallying around the bottom floor, I decide to climb the large staircase and venture onto the second floor. The wall against the stairwell is also covered in framed insects, much like the first-floor hallway, except that the higher I ascend, the larger and more elaborate the frames seem to grow in size. I can feel my buttons flicker at the excitement I feel, stepping from one step to the next, the wood creaking as I observe the large, dead, pinned bugs double in size and beauty. *Are these critters native to Nightmare?* Part of me hopes they are.

I reach the top of the second floor, immediately looking around. The upstairs only has a few bedrooms, most of which are larger and far more glamorous than anything I’ve ever lived in. They seem opulent, each classier than the last, until I step into the last room, the shock of it stopping me in my tracks. The room isn’t elaborate or fussy, instead filled with basic furnishings and a similar aesthetic as the rest of the home, but what makes it perfect, and stops me in my tracks, is the large stained-glass window consuming most of the main wall, looking out into the world. The moon shines brightly through the grayscale glass, casting faint beams and dancing shadows out across the bare wooden floor as the limbs of the dead tree outside

lightly rock back and forth in the wind, tapping at the thick glass, creating a sweet little tempo.

My body sways gently to the lulling beat as I began to sweetly hum alongside it. I peer around the room, spying a small pile of furs strewn across a simple chair. My hands delicately stroke the furs, chills shooting up my spine at the smooth, comforting feel of them. They're extremely soft, unlike anything I've felt before. *What an odd sensation.* I grab the top fur, wrapping the heavy material around me as my body instantly begins to warm up. *I could use these to stay warm, like blankets*. I become overjoyed at the idea of being able to not only sleep on a bed but have proper bedding and warmth. A place all to myself. In Dreadmoor, my room was nothing like this. I slept on a pile of old, tattered rags and had only a single candle to keep me warm in the cold darkness, one I had to conserve for both light and heat. Creations like myself aren't allowed the comforts of others, but instead are kept locked away until we are found useful—something I rarely ever was. I would carefully sneak away when possible, and over time, I learned the horrific truth of that wretched world and my Creator. It was a sickening thing to discover, leaving me to question my existence. I wasn't like the other creations; I was made from scraps, incomplete and tossed aside. A mistake. I didn't blindly obey the Creator like the rest. I was different, and always felt out of place. Maybe here, in Nightmare, I could finally have a place where I belong.

I quickly grab the pile of furs and toss them onto the bed, pausing, when something falls from them and lands at my feet with a thump. I glance at the odd shape, its tail and limbs sprawled out as I realize it's a creature of some sort. Slowly bending down, I discover the small pile of gray fur and skin is a partially stuffed rat. I poke at the frail thing, jabbing its fluffy side, checking if it's alive, but it doesn't budge. Its fur is patchy, missing in a few spots, its whiskers bent and frazzled, as if it was electrocuted at some point. I pick the lifeless rat up, its body flopping around like a ragdoll. It's missing an eye, the socket empty and dried, while the other is a tiny black button stitched poorly into the carcass of the small critter. Something about this little rat humors me. It's odd and unique, but in its own way, cute and comforting. I boop its little nose, giggling as I lift it with both hands into the moonlight.

"It seems we were meant to meet." I wiggle the lifeless body as the single button eye stares back at my own. "Hmmm, now what should I call you, little sir?" Instantly, the most random, yet fitting, name pops into my head. "Mr. Whiskers!" I stand, twirling the flimsy, partially stuffed rat around as I clutch him close. "The perfect name." I fall back onto the bed, nestling into the many furs as I quickly become overcome with exhaustion. I yawn, curling into myself as I hold Mr.

Whiskers close, stroking his furry little head. “Just two misfits,” I whisper, slowly drifting off into sleep.

For the first time in my life, I feel safe.

Chapter 2

Blue

Her words...
Riddles in air,
Full of odd temptation.
They draw me out to the world,
Her words.

It has been three days, and each day, I find myself venturing further and further away from my new home, looking for... well, anything, really. No, not anything; I am looking for that Havoc being. As mystifying as she is, she's all I know here. I've tried to find others while creeping around on my walks, but despite knowing there are others, I feel as though I'm all alone here. I never thought I'd miss anything from Dreadmoor, but at least there—despite always being locked—there was some sign of life and interactions with the other creations. After days of wandering the never-ending darkness, I begin to think Havoc was simply a hallucination, a fabrication of my own making adding a new layer of madness to my predicament.

I walk down an unfamiliar wooded trail, attempting to kick a small rock with my shoe as I go. I should know better, my foot completely missing as I stumble in the process. "Ow," I groan, landing with a thud on my behind. "At least no one saw that," I mutter while dusting myself off as I stand back up. From what I've seen in recent days, Nightmare is very much the same yet different from Dreadmoor. It's the same in that it's vast and heavily wooded, but different, as I don't know the entirety of what creations and monsters inhabit this world. It's unknown to me, much like the smell here. Inhaling deeply, I'm consumed by a smell that reminds me of a fresh, earthy scent—like a foggy morning walk deep in the woods. I inhale again, enjoying the oddly comforting smell. Everything back in Dreadmoor was dipped in a smokey crust, as if the world was made up of burning embers. It makes sense, considering it's very much Hell to be there.

A twig snaps in the distance, causing me to jump and spin around, my nerves on edge. I see nothing, but I can hear the rustling closing in

on me.

"Hello?" I call out weakly. "Who's there?" *Who's there? Blue, this is precisely why you were thrown into the cage. You don't call out who's there when you're defenseless—*

My mental scolding is abruptly halted as a sudden force shoves me to the ground. I instinctively try to fight back, but between the endless night and bright moon shining above, I'm unable to really see. My hands frantically scramble around, luckily finding a rock. I grip it, hurling it at whatever the thing is, making it yelp out as it yanks my hair so tightly, I fear it might rip out at the roots and unravel. My nose is suddenly filled with the congesting scent of dirt as whatever I hit pulls me close, a gasp escaping its body.

"Her eyes!" a male voice snarls. "They're buttons. She's from Dreadmoor!"

"Indeed she is," a second man's cold, calm voice purrs. The snarling man releases my hair and my head fills with the painful sting. "And what a pretty little toy that bitch made this time." He marvels. My eyes focus, as I glare at the strange man. He's very tall and thin, dressed in a suit, and his face painted like that of a skeleton. "So very pretty. I always did have a thing for ragdolls." He reaches a long, boney hand out, trailing it up my tights, reaching under the skirt of my dress, causing me to gasp and smack him away.

"Don't touch me!" I hiss, standing up. The gangly man looks down to the snarling, ghost-like creature beside him and releases a sigh of disappointment. "Well, if you don't want to play with me," he grumbles, adjusting the cuffs of his sleeves,"I'm sure my friend here would just *love* to have fun with you. Pity; I would've made it enjoyable for us both." He smirks before cocking his head. "Sic'er."

My heart drops as the man-creature lets out a loud, almost animalistic howl just as my flight instincts kick in and I take off running, the ghostly thing close behind me. I cry out as something scratches at my arm, my lungs burning as I force myself to run faster, all while knowing whatever that thing is, it's gaining on me. *Could it be him? Was that thing chasing me, the Boogeyman?*

"Please," I wheeze, running through a foreign part of the woods, huffing the cold night air as lingering dead branches of surrounding trees pull and snap at my dress, ripping at the fabric and scratching my skin. "Please, stop!" My body shoots forward as the creature dives on me. I let out a choked cry as it slams my chest roughly into the ground. "Stop it!" I grit out, trying to kick him off. He grabs the back of my head, slamming me against the ground, a shooting pain striking my head, causing the world to slow and spin.

"Help," I weakly choke out as I feel icy hands running up the bare backs of my thighs. I turn to look over my shoulder to beg once more,

but as I go to speak, a dark figure slams into the creature, sending it flying off my body. The dark figure lands with a loud thud, and as the creature runs back toward us, snarling with anger and frustration, I cover my mouth to stifle a scream as the figure whips out a large knife, slashing it across my attacker without hesitation. The creature shrieks and cries out as a glowing liquid pours from the wound. It stumbles, trying to fight off the stranger, but it's too weak. The large dark figure removes the knife as my attacker falls to the ground next to me, his ghostly light fading away as his eyes stare into mine, fading away. He looks... like a normal human now. *How strange.*

The dark figure steps to the deceased being's side and lifts its head as he begins to slowly run the blade along its flesh, sawing it apart. I try not to gag, the cruel act churning my stomach while I watch in helpless, stunned silence. I dry heave when a squelching sound tainted with angry grunts fills the air. The figure doesn't stop until the dead thing's head is completely detached and hanging from the figure's hand, blood dripping onto the ground.

The figure growls, the sounds resembling that of a man's as he chucks the head aside with such strength, it hits the ground with a wet thud. After a moment, the figure turns slowly toward me, the clutched knife still dripping with the creature's glowing blood, breathing heavily. It's almost as if they forgot I was here. I force myself to swallow the nausea and fear as my eyes linger, trying to register its frightening appearance; a tall, wide, and dark being covered in a dull, faded, sack-like material. The face of the sack has an eerily sewn mouth, ripped open, and two dark, endless eye holes which are currently boring into my soul with consuming shadows of darkness. Whatever this thing is, it's completely covered, not a part of it exposed, no eyes or mouth visible. Yet somehow, I feel two very much alive eyes moving up and down my body with interest.

"Who the fuck are you?" A muffled bark causes me to jump and nearly wet myself as I'm ripped from my thoughts. *So it is a person, or a male at least.* I struggle to answer, to find my words and make my mouth work. This seems to irritate him, because, deciding my time to respond is up, he reaches his burlap-covered hand out, roughly grabbing me by the neck, pinning me to a nearby tree, his free hand piercing the dead bark, his knife inches from my face. "Answer m—" He stops, his entire demeanor and voice changing from aggressive to something less as his hold remains the same around my throat. "Holy shit." I hear his breath hitch, my fingers clawing at his wrist as I desperately try to free myself and get a look at him, any part of him through the holes of his mask. "Your eyes," he marvels, his free hand moving to my face. I feel the rough texture of the glove covering his hand as it glides sweetly across my cheek, causing me to shiver.

“You’re from *there*. Dreadmoor.” He pauses for a moment before whispering in an odd tone, “You’re one of *hers*.”

I nod softly, trembling with fear and anxiety as I finally muster my words. “I am.” I stare into the two black abysses of his mask, straining to catch even a glimpse of him. “W-who are y-you? How d-do you know about Dreadmoor? Of the Creator?” The energy in him shifts at my words as he releases my neck. My body falls to the ground while he slowly backs away, shaking his head.

“Wait,” I call out to his retreating figure while wobbling to my feet, my body sore and tired from the attack. “W-where are you going?” He continues to ignore me. “Wait. Please! Don’t leave me here alone! What if that thing comes back?” I desperately cry out, anxiety ripping through my nerves as a distant shriek echoes in the night. *What if that skeleton man comes back? Or something worse?* I can’t do this. I can’t be left alone again. “Please!” I scream at him.

He stops and turns back to look at me, the burrowing eye holes staring into my soul. Hope blooms in my chest as I think he’s going to change his mind and stay here with me. Instead, I hear an odd, high-pitched humming from behind. I turn and look to see his bloody blade still embedded in the tree trunk. The knife sways, vibrating through the dead tree, trying to break free. Reaching for the handle, I still its movement with my hand, wrapping my fingers around the leather as I grunt, yanking it free. I turn, looking back to speak and return his knife, but as I stare ahead to where he was standing, I find... no one.

He left me.

Brushing myself off, I squeeze his knife in my hand, angry and frustrated that he left me out here alone and defenseless. *Well, not entirely defenseless.* With the blade securely in my hand, I waste no time marching my way back to the safety of my home, my steps quiet yet quick. My body remains on edge the entire time back as I feel as though something or someone is watching me. *It’s just my imagination,* I repeat to myself over and over. *It must be*. I’m full of anxiety from the attack, and every noise makes me jumpy right now. *It’s just my nerves. Everything is fine. I’m fine.*

Once inside my deliciously macabre home, I slam the door shut, locking it the best I can before running straight up the stairs to my room. As I close the door and lean against the chipped back, a wave of instant relief hits me upon seeing Mr. Whiskers sitting perfectly atop my journal, nestled along the layers of furs. I found the old leather notebook yesterday in one of the other rooms while exploring, the discovery truly a gift as I always wanted the chance to write my little poems and feelings down. And now, given a way to do that here, it was a very emotional moment for me. I feel more at home and at peace in Nightmare than I ever did in Dreadmoor. Add in today’s

unlucky experiences, and I'm an emotional wreck.

"Mr. Whiskers," I cry, flopping onto the bed, placing my floppy little friend on my stomach, running my fingers over his patchy fur. "It was terrible out there. This creepy skeleton-like man attacked me, him and his ghostly friend, and I think—" My words trail off as I stop as I realize what I was about to confess. "I think I met the Boogeyman. There were these two men, or creatures, who attacked me. I think he was one of them, and the other must've been his minion." I shiver at the thought of their hands on my body, moving along my skin. Being locked away, I've never been intimate, not even a kiss, and to know that was almost stolen from me...

Stop thinking about it, Blue. You're home. You're safe.

Blinking away the anxiety and heartache lingering in my mind, I continue to talk to Mr. Whiskers about my encounter. He's always such a great listener; never once has there been judgment, I'll admit, I've revealed some things to him that would cause even me to think twice, but he just listens and lets me speak my mind. I know how this appears on the outside: a sheltered woman giving life and a personality to a clearly dead thing, but everyone has an imaginary friend at some point in their life. I once remember finding a small child in Dreadmoor. I could hear her talking and talking for hours, never missing a beat. My curiosity overtook one night as I snuck out of my own prison to observe her. We creations weren't allowed to interact with the others, but I needed to know who she was always telling her stories to and rambling on with, but as I peeked through the crack of her weathered door, I found no one there with the girl. She was alone, speaking to the darkness across from her and her single flickering candle. I continued to observe her for days, realizing she was interacting with her imaginary friend—at least that's what my Creator called it. However, the night that poor girl met her unfortunate fate, I'll never forget a tiny mirror in her little prison fell and shattered, and for some reason, I always thought that was her friend. Afterall, we're all simply vessels for energy, right? Who's to say that you can't be so lonely, so desperate for companionship that you could transfer some of your energy, creating the illusion of a "friend"?

"There was this other man. He wore this heavy mask," I whisper while looking up to the ceiling, my heartbeat quickening. "I know nothing about him, but he knows me. Well, correction: he knows of my world, Dreadmoor, and the Creator. He saved me." A small smile pulls at the corner of my lips as I think about his touch, the way it ran across my face so delicately as he stared into my soul. *What I wouldn't give to feel it without those gloves...*

I shake my head, pushing such strange thoughts away as I realize I'm still holding his knife tightly in my grasp. I stare into my

reflection, the moonlight bouncing from my dual, grey-toned button eyes. An urge overcomes me as I bring the leather-bound handle to my nose and inhale. The scent is so unique, the oils on the leather consuming me, but there's also a warm, spicy scent that enters through my nose and hits me in my belly button, making me blush.

"I want to find him, to thank him properly for saving me from the Boogeyman." I give Mr. Whiskers a final scratch on the head, flicking away a couple of stray pieces of fur that fall off him before gently laying the knife on the small nightstand and settling in along the furs. Rolling onto my side, I glance out the bedroom window and see a shadowy figure move across the dead branches of the overhanging tree. *It's just my imagination. You're safe here, Blue.* I yawn, brushing the fear aside.

Closing my eyes, I hold Mr. Whiskers close as I quickly fall into a dreamless sleep.

Chapter 3

The BOOGEYMAN

"Fucking hell, if you don't stop that, I'm going to reach inside your mouth, rip out your tongue, and force you to choke on it."

With a frustrated grunt, I grab a nearby rock and hurl it in Havoc's direction, effectively silencing her incessant kissing noises. It seems like every waking moment the past few days has been spent with her making these obnoxious sounds, and I'm beyond fed up with it. The disrespect these assholes show me on a regular basis is enough to make me want to commit murder, but ever since meeting that new doll, they've become unbearable, especially Havoc. I can't blame her, though; I'm not the same either. I am a man consumed, possessed. I can't think, can't focus—nothing.

Damn this creation. It's not easy to throw me off balance, or at least, I've never been thrown off like this before. But when I touched her cheek, the flush that crept up my neck to my face was undeniable. I have never been so thankful to have my burlap mask concealing it or the thick, itchy attire to keep myself hidden beneath. The doll is extraordinary and surprisingly pleasing to look at, her blue and yellow colored hair perfectly split and glowing in the blacklight of the moon. She's not the first doll I've felt an attraction to, but this is different, an all-consuming need to have eyes on her. Why? I don't know. She's not entertaining, and she hums... a lot. I don't like it. What does she have to be humming about?

She's an odd creation, unlike any I've encountered before. Something about her draws me in, but at the same time, I have to fight back and resist whatever strange sexual pull she has on me. While dolls can and are created here in Nightmare, her button eyes are the signature of a Dreadmoor doll, reminding me of who and *what* she is, but most importantly, who she serves. One of the Spinster's retched creations. That fact alone should've been enough reason to hunt her down and end her, but for some fucking reason, my feet stay firmly planted as I continue to stare.

The sheer fact that I'm unable to perform the task I've been performing for centuries over a breathy voice and mismatched eyes is making me question myself. I should've killed her the moment I saw her in the woods. Now, I'm fucked, and instead of trying to win the

Spinster's game and escape, I'm fucking following this doll. *Stalking her.* Obsessed with the gnawing need of knowing more.

I followed her home that night I saved her and discovered she's holing up in the old taxidermy building that's been abandoned for as long as I can remember. It's an interesting choice, to say the least, an old Victorian mansion field with dead things stuffed and sewn together. She must've felt at home there amongst the other critter creations.

That very same night, I climbed the trees outside the home, searching every glass paned window until I eventually found her. I could barely make out her form through the glass, but her gray-blue skin seemed to almost glow in the bright looming moonlight that peeked through the thick glass and highlighted her form. That should not be something I find smile-worthy, yet as I stared through her window, my cheeks became sore. It's fucking pathetic. Maybe I do deserve the shit I'm getting from Havoc.

I shouldn't be watching or stalking her like this. I shouldn't be *this* interested in this damn doll, but I am... and I have been since Havoc started rambling on and on about finding a dolly with skin the color of her name with hair as yellow as ripe bananas mixed with plump, juicy blueberries. At first, I assumed it was just utter nonsense, as per usual, but after that night, I realized there was more to her words.

Often, I attribute Havoc's usual and nonsensical chatter to the button eye she sewed into her socket some years ago. It's the only plausible theory I've come up with that explains the odd workings of her psychotic brain. But that day, in between her whines and moans, she mentioned something that caught my attention: *Stingy Jack.* The name lingered in the air, causing my blood to turn hot and my heart rate to spike.

Stingy Jack is the embodiment of Nightmare, a merciless, self-made ruler who wields his power like a god, crushing anyone who dares to defy him. I've learned this the hard way, having been banished to the desolate outskirts deep within the haunted woods for refusing to bow down to him at the threat of being hunted and returned to the Spinster herself. Fucking prick.

In my earlier days here, I tried to stay on his good side, use his influence to outsmart that old Spinster, but apparently, being a man with many interests—including a certain red-haired doll—I had found myself on his bad side, having slept with the wrong woman. I only found out she was his after the fact. We were caught, my head buried between her legs as she cried out for me, coming all over my face as Stingy Jack watched, sickened by the sight. Who was I to know the pieced together woman was his? She never mentioned him, and I'm not known for my lengthy conversations.

After nearly escaping my death, I've remained clear of Stingy Jack and all dwellings within his little town, including that red-haired doll. I might be stronger than him, but he has a number of followers, each instructed to kill on site if I'm spotted. It's a never-ending threat, one I don't want to face. Yes, even I, the elusive Boogeyman and a ruthless monster from Dreadmoor, am scared of losing to Stingy Jack.

"Life would be infinitely better with more blood orgies," Havoc states with such a level of seriousness, it's startling. I glance back at her in shock as she runs a small blade across her open palm and watches her own blood drip onto the ground.

"Why are you even here, Havoc?" I recoil under my mask as the woman stares blankly at me, her gaze piercing through the fabric as she licks the fresh droplets from her hand.

She tilts her head, as if listening to someone talk. No one is there, but it doesn't stop her from having a two-way conversation.

"Havoc doesn't think it's the time," she huffs, a hint of madness creeping into her voice. "The moon simply won't allow it!" My jaw tightens in irritation as she yells, causing me to grab her roughly and shove her out of the tree line into the open night. The last thing I need is for this psycho to give away my hiding spot with her deranged outbursts. As she stands and stumbles away, muttering to herself about something random, I turn my attention back to the doll sitting across the way out in the open. She sits in the dirt, small and delicate, hunching over an old, leather-bound book with impressively intense focus. Her fingers move deftly across the pages as she writes, unaware of my presence within the tree line. I can't help but wonder what she could be writing down in the small book. Could she possibly be another one of the Spinster's spies, gathering information about me for our game? It would make sense; she's a doll. At least... I think she is. She's unlike anything I've seen the Spinster send to Nightmare before. Her button eyes should be a set of traditional black, yet one is blue. Even her skin is different. Typically, the skin of creations in Dreadmoor is a dull, ashen color, yet hers, again, is a shade of blue, as if a hint of life has been breathed within it. Her split hair is the color of... I stop, sighing at the words as they register in my mind: *fucking blueberries and bananas.*

Fucking Havoc. Rolling my eyes, I watch as Havoc suddenly appears not too far from the doll. She saunters over to the occupied creation and sits down, completely casual. *What the fuck is she doing? Does this doll know her?* I remain frozen, listening, connecting the dots. Yes, Havoc mentioned her "dolly " the other day, but I was under the impression that since Havoc hadn't brought her to the tree house to... play with... that she must've only seen her from a distance.

Havoc plucks the book right out of the girl's hand and peers at it,

causing the doll's blue face to go a crimson color as she reaches for her stolen journal. Fearless—or absolutely stupid—the girl tries to climb over Havoc, who simply pushes her back with one hand, cackling as she reads aloud. Interesting, considering Havoc doesn't like to be touched. I've watched her on several occasions go darker than I ever thought possible for someone like her. Grabbing or touching Havoc was a mistake both Charisma and Sullen had to learn the hard way, though it was a bit amusing for me to watch. Yet, she allows this girl to do so freely. My curiosity peaks as I observe the interaction between Havoc and the doll. She addresses her as Blue, a seemingly unoriginal name, but considering the Spinster did not even offer me a name, it's not surprising that she would give her a generic one.

Blue stands, her captivating face twisting in a mixture of frustration and confusion as Havoc sits and continues to cackle her unnatural laughter. She's engrossed in the book, her excitement echoing through the air as she reads the scribbles out loud. What she's reading doesn't sound like the notes of someone spying for the Spinster. My brows furrow as I listen and think over the spoken words. No, it isn't notes. It sounds more like... poetry?

"Boss man!" Havoc's loud, shrieking voice ripples through the trees, making my blood run cold with a mix of fear and anticipation as she shouts to the trees in my direction. "The colors mix to make you! Come and see!" Blue's face snaps towards the tree line, her button gaze searching for anyone. It's futile, though, she can't see me hidden in the dense foliage. Feeling unusually exposed and vulnerable, I take a silent step back, then another, until I can feel myself fully drenched in the shadows of the forest. I rip my mask from my face as cool air brushes against my skin while I continue to push deeper into the woods, leaving Havoc with the girl who is certainly grabbing my attention. My mind races with thoughts and fears, wondering what will happen if and when she and I actually have a real meeting.

"THIS IS STUPID," Sullen mutters, his frustration evident as he sits in the treehouse with Charisma and Havoc.

"It amazes me that you think I care about your opinions," I snap while running my hand through my dark hair as I ready myself to head out for the night, staring at my dull burlap mask. One day, one fucking day, I'll never be forced to wear this fucking mask and outfit again. I'll never have to conceal myself for fear of being seen and

ambushed by *her* fucking creations. But that day isn't today, and the last thing I need is that girl, or the Spinster's other creations, finding me while I'm out tonight. Or worse: Stingy Jack. The man must be furious over what I did to his ghostly pet, and if he didn't already want me dead, he certainly does now. I have to be careful, as I have a target on my back.

"Havoc finds it concerning," Havoc mutters while balancing a bone precariously on her nose. *Where the hell did she even find that?* "The stingy old Jack will want payback."

"I'll keep it in mind," I reply dryly. "And whose finger did you have to snap off for that new toy?" I ask, causing her wicked grin to spread, her sharpened teeth fully exposed.

"Don't put fingers in holes without paying tolls," she sings while Charisma takes a seat next to her.

"Boss," they begin, their sharp eyes meeting mine. "I have to agree with this colorful nutcase. Are you sure you've thought this through completely?" Charisma, while just as much of an unpredictable character as the other two, tends to be more thought out and willing to weigh pros versus cons... usually. If they weren't so consumed with the amount of glitter coating their hair or the perfection of the fluorescent paint on their face, then they might have more time to be logical like Sullen, the hot-headed realist of the trio.

"Thought what through?" I chuckle bitterly while throwing my itchy suit over my shoulders. "It's simple: she's clearly a spy for that cunt. She's connected to Dreadmoor and she's here. I'd be a fool not to get close and observe her." *Sure, that's what I'm doing. 'Observing'. Right.*

"Havoc senses love coming into the air." She motions her hands above her head as she warns sweetly while taking a deep breath through her nose. "Inhale, boss man, and no more tries." I huff, tired of her nonsense for the moment.

"Good thing I have a mask, then, isn't it? Now, all of you, get my place cleaned up. I let you live here; the least you could do is not treat it like a dump." I point to the dead creature, skinned and gutted on the floor. *Even if it is one.* Charisma makes a face, dragging their steep, knee-high boots from the ground as they stand. Their skeleton painted face and skin suit stretches as they wrap their ridiculous feather boa over their shoulders, delicately walking past Havoc, who remains grinning, as if frozen in place.

"Havoc should be cleaning this crime scene, considering it's *her* mess," Charisma snaps while flicking their wrist at the girl. Dangerous move, considering she apparently snapped a finger off someone recently.

"Charisma doesn't complain when Havoc steals them those pretty

little feathers around their neck!" She waves her fingers in the air towards Charisma's new feathered boa. "Pluck, pluck, pluck, and yet Havoc's naughty!"

"Just clean it up," I snap, leaving the two behind to figure their shit out. I place my mask over my head before fully stepping out of the tree house and into the night.

SITTING ON THE THICK BRANCH, I stare lazily at the blue and yellow blur through the window. This ridiculous routine of mine has become customary. Apparently, when I said I wanted to learn who this doll is, and what she's doing in Nightmare, what I really meant is I want to sit outside her window like a god-damn owl and stare at her like a fucking freak. I'm the fucking Boogeyman! I have a god-damn terrifying reputation, and yet *I* am hiding from this girl.

Hiding. That's all I ever fucking do is hide. I hide my body. I hide my face. I hide from the townspeople and Stingy Jack. I hide from the Spinster, and now, I hide from *her*. A doll. Call it a lack of common sense or a wave of adrenaline or even a moment of insanity, but I'm deciding right here and now to change this fact.

"Fuck this," I mutter as I carefully crawl across the long branch and move toward the windowsill, something I've done numerous times now, as stalking this damn doll has become a part of my existence, but this time is different. This time, instead of staring through the window as my breath fogs the glass, I decide to push against it as a small portion of the window swings opens, allowing me enough access to creep into her room. I weasel through the window, careful not to snag my mask as I slither through. Once inside, I look around the simple room, the shadows of the small fire burning in the simple fireplace next to her bed dancing along the walls as it pops with little life. It smells... musty and old and dated, as one would expect from a place filled with dead things. My eyes trail over the walls, noticing carcasses of bugs nestled neatly in their glass-framed tombs. *Interesting.*

Quietly, I approach her bed, my eyes gazing over her body tucked beneath a layer of miscellaneous dark furs. I feel a deep pull, and it's as if, even if I want to turn away, some invisible force won't allow it. I am a moth, and she is my flame. Being drawn to her is dangerous, and every fight or flight instinct is screaming within me to stop, to run, to kill. Yet here I am, allowing her to burn my wings as I fly closer.

My eyes trail from the foot of her bed to her head, taking in every

characteristic and detail, as if I'm trying to imprint her on my fucking soul. Ha, a soul—as if I was given one of those. Something catches my attention, and I frown as I see a nasty rat curled up beside her, sleeping. *She'll probably freak out if that's there in the morning.* I don't know why, but something compels me to be nice. I grab the tail, expecting the creature to wriggle and squeak, but it doesn't. *That's odd*. I lift the little critter and bring it closer to my face as I peer closer.

"Oh my God!" I whisper loudly, dropping the very dead and very poorly stuffed rodent to the ground with a floppy thud as a full body shiver takes over me. *What the fuck? It's dead*. I groan lightly in disgust. The rat is dead and stuffed, sort of, and she's *sleeping* with it? My head whips back to the increasingly weirder girl.

Fuck the moth to the flame. I refuse to be drawn in by *this* level of weird. I'm about to just say fuck this shit, kill her, and deal with Havoc's undoubtable sobbing and lashing out in retaliation for me destroying her play-thing. There is no redeeming quality to her; she's cuddling a dead rat! I place my hands on my hips, sighing at the ridiculousness of it all.

The noise of movement across fabric grabs my attention, and I glance back and watch as the doll moves, rotating around the bed when one of the furs slips to the floor. *Okay... Well, maybe she has one redeeming quality.* I click my tongue, suddenly very interested in what I'm looking at. The doll—well, woman by the looks of it—is sleeping peacefully in the nude under all those heavy furs. Between the blue tone of her stitched skin and the sweat from sleeping beneath so many pelts, her bare chest glistens and glows in the moonlight.

Fuck, her breasts are stunning. I swallow thickly, a hunger suddenly burning inside me. I can't help but stare at her full figure. Her breasts are large, full and vivacious, with dark, round nipples, both tight and perky. I can't help but lick my dry lips as I step closer, painfully aware of how hard my cock is becoming. She looks so innocent and alluring, as if she's just peacefully laying there, waiting for someone to come and worship her. Doll or not, everything about her physical appearance is literal perfection. *Fuck, I'm not a man to bow but for this body, I may just drop to my knees.* And just like that, she has once again drawn me in.

I slowly reach out to touch her smooth-looking skin, only to stop, realizing that my hands are covered in the itchy burlap gloves. The ugly, rough texture will clash against her perfection, the uncomfortable touch surely waking her. Before I can blink or ponder about what I'm even doing, I remove a glove, my ink-covered hand glowing every color in the moonlight. I hold my breath as I reach out again, a soft gasp escaping my mouth as it makes contact with her. I

freeze, my heart racing as I delicately run my fingers along the soft skin between her breasts, a bold and risky move. *Oh fuck, she's so warm and inviting.* The backs of my fingers run over the mound of her right breast, causing her to release the tiniest of moans from her plump lips that hits me right in the cock. I struggle, knowing my own limits and what I'm doing isn't exactly right, but I don't care. I just want to feel her. *Fuck it.* I rip my other glove off. *I won't touch her much, just enough to have a little taste.* Like a man possessed, I unfasten my suit, reaching in, grabbing my throbbing cock. I stare at her body, consumed by her beauty as it flexes in my hand. I begin stroking myself while my fingers run over her pebbled nipple, flicking it ever so lightly, pretending my hand is hers, her dainty stitched fingers running along my shaft.

She releases a soft whimper in her sleep while I continue rapidly stroking. I'm not sure if it's the idea of her sleeping, unaware of what I'm doing, or the sounds she's making, but I'm suddenly *very* aware of how fucking turned on I am. I lightly pull the furs down further, exposing her midriff as I stare with a new, crazed hunger, my movements beneath the suit increasing in both speed and pressure.

"Fuck," I whimper under my breath, stroking my cock. I bite my lip to the point a coppery taste hits my tongue—my blood. I grip her breast a little rougher, and she whines needily as her hips arch ever so slightly, her body quietly begging to be touched. My jaw tightens in response to the simple, yet way too erotic display. *God, I want more. I need more. I've already gone this far; what's the harm?* Giving into my urges, I make the erratic decision to travel further south, taking my time gliding my fingers over her flat stomach and stopping on her mound. I feel the heat rolling off her, lulling me to continue. I freeze, the veins in my hand bulging with anticipation, weary of crossing this dangerous line. *I shouldn't be doing this. I shouldn't be here.* I feel myself nearing the edge as I continue to stroke my cock. *Oh, but I have to know. I need one touch, just one touch, and I'll be done. I promise.*

I hesitate before sliding my finger sweetly between her lips, instantly shivering in pleasure. She's not just excited; she's *dripping*.

"Fuck," I hiss as I lose all control and come hard into my fist, soaking the front of my pants in cum. My mask thankfully muffles my moans as my body jerks and flexes while lightly hunching forward. I continue to slide my finger up and down her wet slit a couple more times while rubbing out the last drops of my ejaculation, imagining our wetness mixing together. "Oh God," I whimper as my fingers hit her clit. It's swollen and peeking out between her lips, begging to be touched. *Fuck it.* I begin to trace her clit, moving my finger further south as I stroke her wet opening. She moans softly against her pillow as my cock aches in my hand, overwhelmed and exhausted. I collect

her arousal and bring my fingers to my mask, slipping it up. I stare at her wetness glistening in the moonlight, rubbing the tips of my fingers together, admiring how it glows a faint blue.

Mine.

I immediately open my mouth, sucking my fingers clean, my eyes rolling in satisfaction. *Fuck*. She tastes so good—too fucking good. She's something I can become very addicted to very easily.

As my excitement calms, my senses return, and I have to force myself to back away from her body. It takes all my strength to slide the furs back up around her naked self, my muscles flexing as I fight my own strength, refusing to climb on top and bury my dick in her right here and now. I need to get away from here, away from her.

I fix my sack, returning the thick, burlap mask to my face as I begin to step toward the window when she stirs. The immediate fear of being seen rushes me as I panic and run out the bedroom door instead of the window. I quickly rush down the steps and silently make my escape without getting seen... this time. My racing heart slowly steadies as I exhale, ducking into the shadows and begin to walk toward the forest. The image of her naked body remains burned into my mind, the feel of her wetness still lingering on my lips. She's consuming my entire being, but why?

Fuck. Reality begins to brutally settle into my thoughts. I've not just seen and stalked her; I've felt and tasted her. How am I supposed to just go back to casually existing, playing the game and sitting outside her window, watching her? Part of me begins to wonder what it would be like to be with her… *Fuck, no.* I snap at myself. *She's not the type I can fuck—she's a doll. I need to keep my distance.* Even as I think this, parts of my consciousness scramble to figure out how it would feel if I was to slither inside her tight body. *Fuck, get your shit together!* I snap at myself, wandering back in the direction of the haunted woods.

She's a creation, a fucking doll. *You can't do this. You need to control yourself. You're not Stingy Jack; you can't just go fucking people without their knowledge.* I run my tongue along my lips, the taste of her lingering as I savor the reminiscing moment. "Fuck," I groan out. Having morals, even just a measly few, sucks ass sometimes. "Okay, I'll go back one more night. That's it. Then, I'll stop. I'll leave her alone, no more stalking, no more hyper fixation, just focus on the game." That little bargain sounds easier in my head versus speaking it out loud. *Right, I can do this, one last time and it's over.*

Just one more night.

Chapter 4

The BOOGEYMAN

I feel as though tonight can't get here any slower if it were trying. However, despite my excitement and need to see her again, I'm unfortunately not alone. This time, all three of my shadowing minions decide to tag along, thanks to Havoc's ridiculous words:

"*Danger here, danger there, danger, danger everywhere. Boss must have the company of three while he sits upon the knowing tree.*"

Charisma is enamored by the idea of a doll walking around in Nightmare. They're eager and ready to lay their pale purple eyes on the creation with the unusual hair and mismatched eyes. Sullen, on the other hand, could give two shits about anyone other than himself —except for Charisma, which is the only reason he decided to tag along.

Havoc skips ahead of the rest of us, leading the way as we try to keep up with her surprisingly fast strides. For such a little thing, she's always extremely quick on her feet, even while wearing those ridiculous platform shoes.

"I still don't see why you all had to join me tonight," I grumble to Havoc as she dances along the dry, winding dirt path that leads up to the doll's home.

"Oh, but you *do* know why, boss man. Such a naughty bug you've been." She taps her button eye and giggles to herself, her grin stretching in such an unnatural way. My cheeks burn with embarrassment beneath my mask as I remain silent, wondering how the hell she could possibly know what I did. "Fireflies must be careful, for they could be squashed and make a messy mess. Frightful fate for fluttering friends, to lose their playthings in the end," she rambles, making less and less sense. *What the fuck is she even saying?*

"I must say," Charisma chimes in with their ostentatious tone, "I can't wait to see this pretty little doll Havoc has been going on and on about." They flick their feather boa at Sullen's irritated face while blowing him a kiss, causing the redhead to hiss, his demon eyes burning with annoyance as his devil tail slaps away Charisma's feathers.

"Dolly is quite pretty, is she not, boss?" Havoc beams while singing the last of her words. I growl a low warning at Havoc's teasing tone. No way am I falling into that trap.

The four of us quickly approach the large, decrepit home perched peacefully atop a lonely hill. “You three are not to enter the home, do you understand me?” I quietly snap.

“Well, you’re no fun,” Charisma snarks. I roll my eyes while approaching the large black tree that grows next to the home, carefully beginning my regular ritual of climbing the tree and scaling the thick branches that reach the outside of the doll’s window.

Idiots, all of them. I don’t understand why they had to tag along, but I wish they’d just fucking leave.

As I reach the large, lingering branch that scrapes against the glass of her window, I peek inside to spy not one, but all three of the fucking minions just standing around the doll’s bed. *What the fuck?* I push forward, swinging the window open as I tumble inside.

“What the hell are you doing in here?” I snap harshly, trying to keep my words quiet, breathing heavily as I stand.

Havoc giggles, kicking her feet as she plops down at the foot of the sleeping doll’s bed, picking at her sharp teeth. Charisma carefully raises the stuffed rat’s body, pinching their nose as they examine it closely, their face doing a piss-poor job at masking their obvious disgust as they respond.

“Havoc over here let us in, right through the front door. Why else would it be unlocked if she didn’t want visitors?” They continue to poke at the limp, stuffed rat. “It seems your doll is knocked out for the night. What a shame. We were really looking forward to playing with your new toy.” They toss the rat down in revulsion. “Plus, you know how much Sullen likes these creations.”

Sullen grins, his fluorescent face paint smeared like a Glasgow smile as his fiery pupils clash against the blacks of his eyes. “What’s the matter, boss? Don’t trust us with your new toy?” he asks, his voice low and demonic.

My breathing increases at the same alarming rate with which my patience disappears. I feel a surge of anger rush through me as the blood in my veins begins to boil. My hands curl into fists at my side, trembling with rage as I stare at the three of them, all smiling as they watch me. Of course I don’t trust them with her. These three love to wreak chaos, especially Havoc. They get off on torturing and killing wandering souls and creations like Blue. Normally, I’m the same, but there’s something about Blue that makes me stop and question myself.

“Good thing Havoc brought you dolly,” she sings, rocking her head back and forth as she kicks her feet.

“What?” I blink, her response hitting me out of nowhere. I look at the slumbering doll as a question hits me. “How is she still asleep? You three are anything but quiet.”

“Havoc knew dolly was lonely and curious like a cat. So she

brought the little creation to the light. Boss man must be happy." I look at Havoc's innocent face as she ignores my question.

"Havoc, so help me God," I groan as she cackles.

"Just a little dust. Not too much, boss man, no worries. Dolly can play more tomorrow."

"Oooo. Interesting," Charisma coos.

"Always meddling," Sullen hisses.

"What the hell are you talking about?" I snap, uncomfortable with the shift of the conversation. "She and I aren't playing. You didn't bring her to me. I just found her when I—" I stop as Havoc finishes my sentence.

"When you followed me!" She leans forward, grinning as her face paint glows in the blacklight of the moon. "Games, games, games. Always playing games!" She cackles, her head tilting back as she laughs.

I quickly rush to her, covering her mouth as she glares up at me. I stare through the eye holes of my mask, watching her. Havoc knows things, things about Nightmare, Dreadmoor, Stingy Jack, the Spinster, and apparently Blue. I need to know what she knows and why she wants me to find this specific creation. "What do you know about this doll?" I ask quietly. Havoc tilts her head to the side, her single button eye glistening as she stares back at me.

"You should probably remove your hand from her mouth if you want her to talk," Charisma snickers, raising a brow. "Hard to talk with a mouthful, you know." They carefully sit next to Havoc, crossing their legs as they wiggle the sole of those ridiculous boots they always wear. "Isn't that right, Sullen?" Charisma smiles over their shoulder as Sullen huffs, crossing his arms.

I look back at Havoc. "When I move my hand, you are going to tell me everything you know about her, do you understand me?" Havoc's eye darkens as she clenches her teeth against the inside of my hand. I quickly move my hand, thankful for once to be wearing my gloves. "Jesus, Havoc!" I whisper loudly.

Havoc snaps her jaw a second time, growling as she watches me. "Shouldn't touch what isn't yours," she threatens. I step back, cautious as she tilts her head and melts into her familiar demeanor. "Dolly is unwanted, punished for her heart. A weak heart. Scraps and mishaps sewn into one. She's blue, like you." She points to me. "Roll the dice, choose her fate. But remember: she is from the one you hate!"

"Nonsense and rhyming. Typical Havoc." Charisma sighs, examining their nails. "Have fun deciphering that one, boss."

I stand there, silently going over her words. A weak heart, roll the dice. Does Havoc want me to gamble with the doll's fate? I pull a pair of green dice from my pocket, inadequate to my prized pair stolen by

the spinster after losing our last game. Havoc had randomly brought me them, hoping they would do, but it's not the same.

I glance at the faded green dice, their glow dull and weak in the moonlight. "You want me to decide." I glance at Havoc. "Alright, what are her options?"

Havoc squeals with excitement, jumping from the bed. Blue stirs, causing everyone in the room to freeze, fearful of her waking. She moans faintly, reminding me of the previous night as I fight back my urges and watch her return to sleep. I sigh in relief, the three minions relaxing their tense bodies as they all look at me.

"Not enough dust, evidently," Sullen scoffs.

Havoc grins, approaching my side. "Fate. Roll her fate! Let's see," she begins to think, tapping her chin.

"What about killing her?" Sullen chimes in, the question an eager one. "Roll a six and let me have my way with the toy." He grins, crouching beside her bed as he stares at her face. "Creations are so unique, each made differently than the last. Roll a six and let me find what makes her tick." A low rumble vibrates in my chest.

"Someone didn't like that," Charisma sings. "I know!" They turn, glancing back at Blue. "Roll an eleven, and I get her hair." They stand, their heels clunking as they approach Sullen's side, lifting a single strand of Blue's hair. "Dolls don't normally have such colorful hair. I want it. Besides, it would look way better on me." They motion their hands, as if flicking hair from their face. "Oh, and you gotta burn that too." They motion to the stuffed rat. Sullen stands, wrapping his arm around Charisma's waist as they giggle with eagerness and excitement.

"Fine!" I snap, killing their mood. "What about you Havoc?" I ask. "What's your choice?"

"Roll a seven and all go to heaven!" She cackles. *Fucking psycho.*

"Havoc," Charisma calls. "I'm not killing myself if he rolls a seven." She tsks at them. "Charisma is no fun!"

"Anything is better than this stupid game," Sullen mumbles.

"Alright, Havoc, your choice is made. But don't be surprised if no one sticks to it."

"Let Havoc do it then! Havoc will make all into angels with big, white fluffy wings! Then shoot them down!" She snickers to herself, pretending to shoot at things in the air.

"Easy," I coo. She suddenly drops her excitement, standing quiet and still. It's an odd, scary sight, as Havoc never remains still long, let alone quiet. She remains frozen, staring into space. Charisma and Sullen both slither to her side, trying to get to her move as they wave their hands and call her name, refusing to touch her. "Havoc?" I ask. Her single eye snaps to me as she stares blankly and whispers, "Dolly can get you there. To *her*."

“What did you say?” Sullen and Charisma back away, stunned by her quiet statement.

“Dolly can travel to the other world. She just doesn’t know it.” This is it. This is my way to Dreadmoor—to her. I can win our game and end it for good. “Boss must make his choice.” Her single eye moves to the green dice in my hand.

I stare at them, pondering the ridiculous decision as I speak the words out loud. “If I roll a two… ” I stop hesitating as Havoc pipes up.

“But careful, boss. Bugs who fly too close to the light burn. Zap!” She claps her hands as I jump at the sudden sound, dropping the dice. *Shit!* They begin to roll across the floor, skipping as one stops at the foot of the bed and the other rolls underneath.

“Nobody move!” Charisma shouts, rushing to the first die. Sullen chuckles, crossing his arms as he watches them. Havoc remains unfazed, staring into an invisible abyss. They bend down, observing it closely. “It’s a one!” Charisma sighs, saddened that they’ve lost. “Whatever. I didn’t really want that doll’s hair anyway. Blue and yellow aren’t my colors.”

“Don’t be such a sore loser,” Sullen snickers. “What’s the other one?”

Charisma looks around, glancing under the doll’s bed. “I have to crawl under there to see it.” They glance up at us. “Boss?” Their lavender eyes sparkle in the moonlight, their skeleton face paint and glitter-covered cheeks glistening in the blacklight. I nod as anxiety rushes through me, wondering what fate has chosen. As Charisma carefully scurries under the bed, I look at Blue, my heart racing and my mind praying the die didn’t come up a five or six. Shit, I’m honestly scared for it to be a one, considering what I’ve chosen. “Snake eyes!”

The color drains from my face as my stomach drops. Charisma climbs from under the bed, bringing me the die as it had landed—a one.

“You cheated!” Sullen growls, infuriated with losing. “These dice are loaded!” He snatches the dice from their hand.

“Lies!” Charisma hisses as the two argue.

Havoc silently steps to my side, yanking my burlap suit as I look down at her. “What is dolly’s fate?” she asks. Sullen and Charisma stop, realizing that I won without saying my choice aloud.

“Yeah, what is the little doll’s fate?” Charisma asks with curiosity.

My hand reaches for my mask, slowly removing it as my inked skin instantly glows in the moonlight. Cold air hits my face, clashing with the burning of my cheeks as I gaze over the sleeping doll. “She’s going to take me to Dreadmoor.”

Charisma and Sullen gasp. “But how?” Charisma asks. Havoc grins,

a dark shadow covering her face as she remains quiet.

I slowly walk to the side of Blue's bed, watching her. "By making her fall in love with me."

Sullen gags at the words as Charisma gasps again with a dramatic hand gesture. "You can't be serious?"

"Caution," Havoc warns. She crawls to the foot of the bed, peeking over at Blue. "Needles make things but undo them too. Bugs wander too close to the lights."

"Havoc, can you just be normal for once?" Charisma sighs, crossing their arms. "No one understands anything you say."

"He does," she whispers.

I do, but no matter what, I will do whatever I need to return to Dreadmoor and win our game. If this doll is the key, then I fully intend on using it—in whatever way is needed. Besides, she's a creation—a toy. I'd never allow myself to fall into the trap of having feelings for her. I may have a physical attraction, sure, but it's nothing more than that. I'll keep my distance just enough while playing my own game. Blue is going to be mine, a pawn in a bigger game. My toy.

Let the new game begin.

Chapter 5

Blue

What thing did I see in my mind?
A pleasing hue of a new kind.

"Right there." Sweat covers me as the odd, warm glow consumes me. I whimper, my hips grinding upwards as I feel myself drawing closer to something. I feel like a coil wound too tight, and I'm about to explode. "Oh. no... Oh—"

"That's it," *his* voice purrs. "Give me your release." I roll my head back and scream as a pleasurable burn consumes me, and something foreign and bright crosses my vision like a flicker.

Bolting straight up, I gasp, looking around the greyscale room. I'm drenched in sweat and... did I wet myself? Reaching down, I whimper at how wet and sensitive I am between my thighs. Was that... Did I have an inappropriate dream about that masked man?

"Naughty dolly." The playful voice startles me, my cheeks burning with both embarrassment and the lingering heat of my dream.

"Havoc?" I call out into the darkness, the fire crackling as I slide further into the layers of furs. "Havoc, is that you?"

Havoc steps from the shadows of the corner of the room, grinning as she holds something within her hands. "Little dolls shouldn't play with themselves. Only bugs." She opens her hands as a tiny little bug flies from her grasp. A Firefly. "Havoc knows something you do not."

"I wasn't playing with myself," I snap while watching the bug. "Wait, what do you know?"

Havoc crawls to the foot of my bed. "You must keep your innocence, for it is not yours to take." She points to me, her single eye bouncing around, as if watching a ghost float around the room. "Green snake eyes choose your fate. Let him teach you since you know nothing." Havoc's eye shoots to me as she giggles. My entire face burns as I realize what she's saying.

"I know plenty about sex, thank you!" I pull at the furs, knocking Havoc to the floor as she cackles out loud, kicking her feet in the air.

"Dolly knows nothing!" she speaks between her unnatural laughter. "Closed eyes!"

I stare at her, frustrated by her teasing. "You should really go

home, Havoc. I'm sure your boss is looking for you."

Havoc rises from the floor, her laughter immediately silenced as she peers up at me. "Boss is playing games." She grips the furs hanging from the side of my bed, clawing her way on top as she hovers over me. "Many games." She tilts her head as her sinister smile grows, her sharp teeth on full display. I turn to look away, frightened of what she might do next. The sound of my racing heartbeat fills my ears as Havoc's distant laughter pulls my attention back only to find her gone. It's as if she vanished into thin air.

"THE DOLLY!" I cringe at Havoc's shriek as she runs toward me.

"Havoc," I smile softly, "Helloo f—" Havoc tackles me to the ground before straddling my waist.

"Why, oh why, does the dolly walk with her head toward the ground? Can't dolly see? The bug she is after doesn't crawl in the dead dirt but flies high in the sky," she whispers in my ear before jumping from me and standing. I give her an awkward smile before freezing. There he is, the same masked man who saved me before, the very one from my sinful dream. Thoughts of it flood into my mind as my cheeks become hot.

"Fascinating," Havoc muses while poking my cheek. "Boss man! Blue and red can be both, not just one. Very important. Not all will be purple. But purple is pretty, like Charisma and dolly. Not Sullen." She makes a face, as if grossed out.

The masked man walks up to us, and it's only now that I realize just how tall and broad he really is. I have to crane my neck to meet his gaze, or, well, to look into the black holes that I assume his eyes are located behind.

"Havoc," the man says, still focusing on me, his invisible gaze heavy on my skin. Havoc races to his side, her hand above her brow.

"Sir," she asks, furrowing her brows dramatically.

"Fuck off," he states simply. She salutes him before skipping off, making kissing noises as she goes.

"H-i-i," I say softly, tucking a strand of my hair behind my ear. "I guess I owe you a thanks for saving my life." I hear him scoff.

"Don't mention it. Just make sure you return my knife." He grunts before turning to leave. I quickly run after him, not wanting to lose my chance to talk to him again. "I-I'm new here. Obviously. I'm actually from the other world, Deadmoor. Do you know of it?" He scoffs while continuing to walk, and it takes everything I have to keep

up with his impressive long strides.

"I'm well aware of that hell hole, dollface, along with that *cunt* who created you." *Cunt? Did he mean the Creator?*

"Y-you are?" I whisper, running in front of him, intrigued and slightly scared. "Y-you know her, and you saved me from the Boogeyman. Havoc, she works for you... right? There's so much I don't know—"

"The Boogeyman?" He stops, snapping. His voice sends tingles throughout my body like I've never experienced before. "I saved you from the Boogeyman?"

"Well... yes. He was with that—"

"You," he states firmly. "He *is* with you, right now." My brows furrow as I look around us before the realization of what he's saying hits me.

"You," I breathe, looking at his mask. "*You're* the boogeyman?"

"Your name for me, not mine," he mutters before turning to leave.

"Well, if that's not your name, then what is?" I ask, still trying to keep up with him, my platform shoes scraping along the dirt. "Mine is Blue." He stops walking, whipping around to stare at me.

"How original. You come up with that one all by yourself?" He taunts as I feel heat flood my cheeks once more as I shake my head.

"N-No, I— my creator. She named me." He tsks, breathing out a dry laugh.

"Well, I guess I can't say much. At least you got a name." Furrowing my brows, I run around to face him. Does he mean he's also a creation?

"Are you from Dreadmoor?" I whisper the question as the eyeholes of his mask look into mine. I wonder what he sees in these wretched buttons. I love eyes. I'm so jealous of the emotions they hold, the depth in them.

"I was," he murmurs. "The Spinst—your creator and I didn't really get along, though." He moves around me to start walking again.

"Wait, are you from there? Are your eyes—" He stops and looks over his shoulder back at me.

"That's enough questions. I don't enjoy chatting, especially not with creations." *Technically, we're both creations.* I release a huff of annoyance.

We walk in silence for a moment before we come across Havoc in the distance, skipping in a circle, singing a rather terrifying song to herself.

"Havoc," I smile softly. "She's—*unique*."

"She's bat shit crazy is what she is." I let out a giggle, which seems to startle him. "What?" I giggle lightly again as he stares at me in bewilderment.

“What are you doing?” His entire body is tense and on edge.

“Laughing?” I say slowly as he shakes his head.

“Well... stop. I don't like it. It makes me uncomfortable.” He shudders at the idea.

“Laughing makes you uncomfortable? Well, geez, I bet the kids just love yo— oh... Right.” *Good one, Blue*. I can’t see his glare, but I can feel it burning the side of my face. I bite my lip nervously before continuing with my non-stop questioning. “You hate her? The Creator?” I already know the answer; no one loves or even likes the creator, but none of us are brave enough to outright admit our hatred for her.

He laughs. “Of course. I wish her the slowest of deaths.” I gasp at his words while stepping back, almost tripping myself.

“What if she hears you?” I hiss, looking around the tree line, waiting to feel her sudden presence as I slightly hunch over in fear.

“She knows better than to come here,” he snarks. “She comes here, and she’s... well... ” His voice trails off as a devious smirk forms on his mask. “She won't, as she’s just like me.”

“Like you?” I ask, mesmerized by his bold statement.

“Oh, dollface, did you really think she started making her creatures as you are now? Button eyed dolls with dull skin and no use?” I flinch at the cruelty in his words. “No, she’s learned, honed her skill and craft over the centuries, almost perfecting it. See, I was her first creation, made in her image.”

“In her image? You mean... You’ve seen her?” I’m in shock. No one in Dreadmoor has seen her true form, only the façade in which she presents herself. She’s a shadow, an evil force so powerful, she needs no shape.

“No more questions,” he warns as he starts walking.

“But I just—”

“Dollface,” he taunts slowly, and I’m reminded of my dream, causing me to subconsciously squeeze my thighs together. “That is enough,” he replies slowly.

“Fine,” I reply. “But, just one last question and I’ll go.” To my surprise, he sighs, stopping as he stands in front of me, crossing his arms, waiting. “Do you really not have a name?” It’s a sad thought, really, being unnamed. Even though my name is odd and picked in a moment of haste with no care, it’s mine. Everyone deserves to have a name.

“You think I’m just hiding my name from you for fun?” He snickers, apparently amused. I’ll take amusement over annoyance or the anger he’s shown.

“Well, no. I just feel weird not having a name to refer to you by. What does Havoc call you?” I ask softly.

“Boss man. Bug, which I have no idea why. Or Sir.” He looks me up and down. “Do you want to call me Sir, dollface?” His voice is low and husky as he speaks and I feel my knees knock together as I swallow hard.

“N-no. I want to call you by your name,” I huff out, uncomfortable with what my treacherous body is doing to me. I don’t even know what he looks like! It’s completely unfair that he has this ability to instantly pull me. Is that a power our creator gave to him? Persuasion? Illusion? These are all things she’s known for in my world. Here in Nightmare, is this his sandbox? Does he control what I see? How I feel? He must be doing something to have this kind of power over me. He’s the Boogeyman, after all. Or at least, that’s what everyone else called him.

“So pick one.” His voice snaps me out of my thoughts. I notice him looking over me again. *Why does he keep doing that?*

“You want me to name you?” I nearly laugh at the asinine suggestion. I don’t even know him. How could I possibly name him?

“I wouldn’t say you’re naming me. I’m not your child or pet. But you’re your own being; you can decide what you would like to call me.”

“And what? You’re just going to answer to it?” He shrugs, leaning his back against the trunk of the tree.

“Guess that’ll depend on if I like it or not.”

I stand, watching as he fumbles with his mask, obviously uncomfortable beneath it. Havoc continues to sing and twirl off in the distance, completely unaware of our presence.

“Why don’t you just take it off?” I ask.

“What?” He freezes, gripping the hem of the mask.

“The mask,” I gesture to the fabric with my finger. “Why don’t you just take it off? It’s obviously bothering you. It can’t be easy to breathe under there.” I step toward him, my hand reaching out for it. “Take it off,”

“What the hell—” He shouts, grabbing my wrist as my fingers brush the thick brim. I gasp, frightened and slightly excited by his grip. The burlap gloves are rough but warm, causing my skin to prickle in response.

“Why won’t you take it off?” I ask in a shy, whispered voice. He yanks my arm down as my body lunges into his, tripping on my platforms. I fall forward, slamming into him. He tilts his head, his breathing loud and heavy as I feel something push against my hip. My hand moves, accidentally touching it as my body reacts, pushing away as I step back. “I-I should go,” I stammer out, quickly rushing away, flustered and overcome by the heavy energy that hangs in the air.

“Bye, dolly!” Havoc screeches in the distance as I bolt away,

flustered and disheveled.

I touched it. I touched the Boogeyman's dick.

I CAN'T SLEEP. Instead, I've spent hours scribbling in my journal, unable to form a single word, let alone a sentence. My mind continues to loop over that moment, the memory of his hard bulge forever seared into my brain. It's as if I can still feel it against my palm, pushing into me. The very idea causes my heart to race as sweat begins to bead around my forehead, my core aching and throbbing. *What is wrong with me?* I slam my head into my pillow, groaning as I struggle to grasp what's happening.

The sound of the floor creaking causes me to raise my head as I peek over the pillow into the darkness of my room, shadows dancing across the walls and floor as the fire crackles next to me. My hand trembles as I snatch Mr. Whiskers, holding him close while I move the pillow aside and step onto the floor, my mismatched stockings highlighted by the moonlight.

"H-hello?" I call out, half expecting Havoc to pop out of hiding. Aside from the dull fire, there's no noise. No response. I slowly inch toward my open bedroom door, glancing into the dark hall beyond. "Hello?" The sound of creaking wood startles me as I rush back into my room, slamming the door behind me while locking it. I lean against the wooden door exhaling with relief.

"Dollface." His voice startles me, causing me to drop my sweet little rat and release a screech of terror. The Boogeyman is leaning against the partially opened window, staring at me through his mask, his arms crossed while playing with a set of dice. "Someone's jumpy." He tilts his head, amusement in his voice. "My dick didn't scare you that bad, now did it?"

My face burns with horror as shame from what happened earlier fills me. His blunt, crude words take me by surprise, and I'm suddenly unable to speak. "I-I-I—"

He pushes himself off the window, stepping toward me as I remain still, sweating and on fire, watching as he stops and slowly lowers himself in front of me, his mask moving as he looks me over. I swallow, running my tongue over my lips as he grips Mr. Whiskers, taking his time to rise, only inches from my body.

"Lose something?" he whispers, settling the rat into my hand, his burlap brushing my skin in the process.

"Thank you," I breathe, pulling Mr. Whiskers close to my chest as I

stare up at him towering over me. “What’re you doing here?” I asked. “Is Havoc with you?”

“Havoc is lost in her own little world doing whatever it is she does. I’m here alone.” *Alone?* “Are you okay?” He reaches his hand out, gently wiping away the beads of sweat that have formed on my forehead. “You seem—”

“I’m fine!” I squeal, ducking from his touch and rushing to my bed. I curl up, bringing my knees to my chest as the hem of my dress flares around my hips. I’m embarrassed, shy, and filled with so many emotions. My nerves are taking control, making me a mess.

He stands at the door, quietly observing me for a few minutes before speaking. “How do you feel about games?” A flicker runs across my button eyes, almost like an instant response. All creations like games. It’s an odd characteristic we seemly inherited from the Creator when sewn together. She loves games, and as a result, so do we.

“Everybody likes games,” I mutter, resting my chin on my knee.

“Well then,” he approaches the bed, sitting next to me, “you’re going to *love* this one. It’s called Truth or Dare.” He leans in close.

“Never heard of it,” I snap, turning my head away.

“Oh, is the toy scared to play the Boogeyman’s game?” he teases me.

“I’m not a toy!” I growl, slamming my knees into the bed as I whirl toward him, my fists squeezing at my side as I smack him with Mr. Whiskers.

“Keep that disgusting thing away from me!” he groans, flinching from the stuffed rat. “I don't know how you can stand it, let alone sleep with that nasty rodent. Fucking stinks!”

I stop, gasping at his words. “How do you know I sleep with Mr. Whiskers?” He straightens his posture. “Answer me!” I raise the rat’s body, ready to strike when he speaks.

“Okay, okay! Havoc told me. Now would you please lower that damn thing? It reeks. Fucking hell.” My arm drops. It doesn’t surprise me knowing Havoc has been snooping around while I was asleep. Seems like a very Havoc thing to do. “Now, do you want to play my game, or should I just leave?” The idea of him leaving saddens me. I’m growing to really like his presence, and honestly, I want to play his game.

Shaking my head, I look up at him. “How do you play?” I ask, tucking the rat next to my bent knees.

“It’s simple, really. We take turns asking one question at a time, which the other person must answer honestly. If they refuse to answer, then they must do whatever the other player says.”

“Seems easy enough. Why would someone not answer a question?” I ask, genuinely curious. He tilts his head, scoffing at my words.

“I guess we’ll have to find out, now won’t we, dollface?” He pulls out a set of dice, rolling them across the bed as he speaks. “Even, I go first. Odd, you.” I watch the dice bounce as they land. “Two. Snake eyes. Looks like I get to go first.” *Snake eyes?* “Let’s see.” He taps his chin. “Why are you here, in Nightmare?”

My stomach drops as I recall the events that led me to my banishment. Lowering my head, I feel a heavy amount of sadness begin to consume me. “I defied her, the Creator, so she sent me here as punishment. Discarded me—” My words break as I sniffle, fighting back tears. *Like trash.*

“Hey, this game isn’t meant to make you sad. Knock that off.” He motions to my face. “Fix it. And go; it’s your turn.”

I wipe my face, forcing back my tears as I inhale, shoving my feelings back. “Okay. Why do you hate the Creator so much?”

He turns his head. “Ask a different question.”

“No, you said each player had to answer truthfully. I asked my question, now answer it.” He leans toward me, breathing heavily behind his mask.

“Are you telling me what to do, dollface?” I press my lips together, squeezing my fingers tight as I stare into those dark eye holes of his mask, struggling to calm my heart. “You like ordering me around now, do you?”

“I-it’s not your turn. You said—”

“Fuck what I said. Choose a different question.” He pulls back, annoyed.

“That’s not how you play.”

“Oh? And you suddenly know how to play so well?” I glare at him, my hands now balled into fists atop my bent knees as I wait for him to answer me. “Fine,” he groans. “Give me a dare.”

“What is a dare?” My hands relax as I sound out the foreign word.

“Just tell me to do something—anything.” He’s obviously annoyed by me and our game, which in return frustrates me as well. This is his game; he has to play by the rules. I watch him as he picks at the thick burlap mask, and an idea forms in my mind.

“And you have to do it?” I asked, slightly excited.

“Mhm.” He nods.

“Take off your mask.”

He turns, looking at me. “What?”

“You heard me. If you refuse to answer my question, then I demand you take off your mask.” I grin, pleased with myself, knowing I have him trapped. I may not know this game, but like other creations, I’m good at all of them. A quick learner.

“You demand now, do you? And what if I refuse?”

“Then you have to answer my question: why do you hate our

Creator?"

"*Your* creator," he growls. "You know," he stands, "I could just end this little game by walking out that door. Or better yet... " He grips his knife I have been keeping next to my bed, tucked slightly under the mattress. "I could end it for you in a much more fun way." He sets the tip of his knife under my chin, raising my head as he watches me.

"Where's the fun in that?" I ask, raising a brow.

He scoffs, watching me as he ponders his decision. "Fine." He drops my chin, removing the knife. "Fucking dolls," he mumbles, gripping the edge of his mask. He takes his time, slowly removing it as something glows from underneath.

I can't help but gasp, my hands covering my mouth in pure astonishment. He's unlike anything I've seen before. Not only is he attractive, with dark hair and a strong jawline, but he's completely covered in strange markings, all of which are glowing in the moonlight. "What is that?" I ask, standing to my feet. "Wha—" I reach my hand out to touch his face. "I—"

He grips my wrist once more, stopping me as I stare, in awe at him. "A sick joke. *Your* creator decided to cover my entire body in this." He motions to the markings etched across his face, glowing unlike anything I've encountered before. "Blacklight tattoos that glow all colors in the never-ending night, always signaling where I am so that she can find me even in the shadows." I can't process his words, consumed by this new spectrum before me.

"What's *color*?" I ask, sounding out the strange word as my eyes trail across his features, studying every single marking and detail.

"What? Your name is Blue, and you don't know what color is?" I shake my head.

"Is it this?" I force my hand from his grip, touching his cheek with my fingers as his eyes widen. His skin is warm and smooth—inviting. My hand looks dull compared to this color as he calls it. It's so intriguing. I can't help but to be curious.

"Blue..." The way he says my name makes my heart skip a beat. My eyes meet his as he places a hand over mine, tilting my head as he speaks in a sweet tone to me. "Do you not see color?"

My eyes bounce from his to his marking. "I see this," I whisper, tapping the vibrant, glowing colors. "I've never seen it before. Any of them. What are they?"

"Well, these are color tattoos, something I'm covered in."

"Everywhere?" I asked sheepishly.

He raises a brow as his lips tug into a smirk. "Everywhere," he repeats, his voice low.

"Why are they—the colors—different? The world I see isn't like this. It's dull, missing this." I touch his nose gently. "It's almost like

the glow I see from a Firefly, but brighter. Oh!" I chime, startling him. "I got it."

"Got what?" he asks.

"Your name." I smile. "Firefly."

"Really? That's the best you can come up with?" He grins, causing butterflies to flutter in my stomach. I cross my arms over my chest.

"Well, if you don't like it," I pout, "then you shouldn't have let me pick!" I turn away from him, itching to see more of his colored tattoos, but annoyed by his insult.

A slow sigh escapes his lips, a mix of resignation and amusement. "Firefly it is," he confirms with a sly smirk. I gasp as his hand twists around my waist, pulling me closer to him until we're face-to-face. *My Firefly.* His dark gaze lingers on my skin, causing a tingling sensation as he leans closer, the energy in the room thickening with each silent second as he simply stares at me. "It's my turn to ask a question," he finally speaks, his deep voice sending shivers down my spine. With a nod, I wait for his inquiry, feeling both nervous and excited, but also entranced by his beauty. I can't look away. His amused chuckle brings me back to reality, "You think this," he gestures towards his own face, radiating with an otherworldly glow, "is something to behold? Just wait until you see the rest of me." He winks playfully, igniting a spark of anticipation within me for what is yet to come.

"Can I?" I asked, surprised by my own question.

"Oh, I'm pretty sure it's still my turn, dollface." Firefly brushes his dark hair back, a single strand falling perfectly in front of his eyes. My button eyes trail down, drawn to the colorful designs peeking from the base of his neck as he leans back, comfortably positioning himself across the foot of my bed.

"Why do you have two different colored buttons?" He points to my eyes and I still instantly, a woosh of cold rushing over me at the unexpected question falling from his lips. "Every creation I've seen dawdling around here in Nightmare has black buttons." He absently plays with a loose thread hanging from his burlap suit. "So, why not you? What makes you so special?"

I stare back at him, completely and utterly speechless. His question holds more weight and hurt than I want to delve into. I don't want to think of why, or that I, in fact, am *not* special. My Creator simply broke my other black button when she was making me and couldn't be bothered to grab another. *Couldn't be bothered because I am nothing special.*

I force an overwhelming wave of sadness and tears back as my fingers pick at one another, the truth behind my unusual appearance being one that has haunted me since creation. I want to tell him the truth, but the thought of him knowing and then possibly losing

interest in me... It's unsettling. I can't explain why, but I want him to want me– to enjoy me, and no one wants or enjoys a pile of scraps. "It's nothing," I breathe, my voice shaking lightly.

"That's not an answer," he replies boredly. I glance toward him, forcing a smile.

"Not everything has an answer," I snip, causing him to raise a brow at my little display of a temper. He bites down on his bottom lip before running his thumb across it. *Is he amused by my anger?* "Ask me another question,"

"Oh no you don't," he teases. "You know the rules. Answer the question or do what I ask." My head lowers in defeat. I want to be truthful, especially after how I just hounded him for the same thing, but I'm not ready to tell him this part of me. Not yet.

Inhaling deeply, I straighten my posture while shoving the feelings back into the depths of my consciousness, before giving him direct eye contact. "Dare."

A flicker of something unreadable dances in the depths of his dark irises, as if my single word has sparked a whole new level to his twisted game. He sits up, the frame of my bed creaking beneath him, and fixes me with a predatory gaze. His lips curl into a sly grin as he speaks, his voice dripping with amusement. "Interesting," he purrs, his tone sending shivers down my spine. "Now, let's see... What kind of dare should I pick for a pretty little doll like yourself?" My cheeks flush with heat at his words, my mind reeling at the thought of being referred to as "pretty" by the notorious Boogeyman himself. He leans back again, lost in thought as he considers his next move while I sit here, half shell-shocked and living on the edge of every word that falls from his lips. The seconds stretch on like hours, each passing moment adding to the growing tension between us, until finally, he breaks the silence and speaks once more.

His eyes bore into mine with a predatory glint, a smile slowly spreading across his lips that speaks of both seduction and malice. I can't help but wonder if it's the first time he's smiled. "I dare you," he growls, his voice laced with a dangerous edge, "to take off your tights." My body tenses at the unexpected request. *Why does he want me to do this?* "Now," he snaps impatiently, and a jolt of fear shoots through my veins as I realize his controlling demand leaves no room for negotiation.

"Y-yes, sir," My voice shakes as I slide off the bed under his intense gaze. My shaking fingers trail up my legs and slip beneath the fabric of my dress, sending shivers down my spine.

"Good girl," he whispers, his low, velvety voice sending shivers down my spine. I comply with his command, peeling the tights off my skin in slow motion. Striped on one half and adorned with stars on the

other, they reveal the pale, stitched skin of my legs. As I kick them towards the foot of the bed, his arm snakes out and catches them effortlessly. His eyes never leave me as he brings the tights to his face, inhaling deeply. “My, my, my, what do we have here?” He takes another sniff and closes his eyes, savoring the scent of my nylon-clad skin. “You smell like the shadows of the moon at night; like wild snapdragons blooming under the black light, eagerly waiting for someone to come and pluck them.” With a dismissive toss, he discards my tights. “A delicious surprise indeed.” I can feel myself blushing as I crawl across the bed on my knees, quickly adjusting my skirt to avoid exposing anything. “N-now what?” My voice quivers as I try to regain composure.

“Now,” he reclines on the bed, eyeing the hem of my dress with hunger in his gaze, “it's your turn to ask me a question. Unless you're feeling too nervous.” His smirk only intensifies my flustered state.

Too nervous? Is he expecting me to bow out and just let him win? Is he purposely teasing and mocking me by using my innocence against me? I furrow my brows and press my lips together as my competitive side wakes up, ready to take control. *Well, two can play that game.* I cock my head at him. “I dare you to show me more of your—” I swirl my fingers around, motioning to his body. “Color.”

Firefly chuckles to himself. “You didn’t even ask me a question.”

“Fine. Will you show me more of your color?” I can’t help but smile at myself, proud in the way I’ve manipulated the game in my own personal favor. Firefly watches me, amused with my words.

“Clever little doll.” He slowly lifts his hand, taking his sweet time as he begins to remove his burlap glove. “But you’re not the only one with a cunning side.” He lifts the glove, completely revealing his glowing, colorful hand. “See? More color.” He wiggles his long, inked fingers, color emanating from his skin. My mouth drops open, both amazed by the color and irritated by his cleverness.

“You might want to close that pretty little mouth of yours.” He leans forward, gently brushing the underside of my chin with his forefinger as he pushes against my face, closing my mouth. “Never know what might land in it.” My jaw tightens with an odd feeling of fear and anxiety. “What’s wrong, dollface? Cat got your tongue?”

“No,” I snap, crossing my arms. “But now, it’s my turn again.”

“You just went.”

“Ah—*you* just went. You asked me a question, and I answered.” A mischievous grin spreads across my face as I watch the wheels turning in his head. He has caught on to my tactic, and his own smile fades, replaced by a grumbling annoyance. With my hands placed delicately on the bed, my hair cascading down my arms, I tilt my head towards him and sing, “Now it's my turn.” I gesture my head toward him. “Can

you show me even more?" My buttons sparkle, enamored by this new idea of color, the various hues and shades completely absorbing my thoughts. The added bonus of Firefly undressing, well, that isn't so bad either.

"I can." He removes his second glove, revealing more colors etched across his skin. "But it's going to cost you. Out there it's an eye for an eye, but with me, it's skin for skin."

"That's not how you play the game." I rear back, my face burning with annoyance and anticipation.

"Says who?" His fingers lightly brush over my hand, tracing the tops of them as they run along my wrists and slowly up my arm. "You said yourself you didn't know how to play this game." His eyes meet mine, and a shiver runs through me. "Come on now, we haven't got all night. Pay up, dollface." Firefly snaps his glowing fingers at me.

I lean back, my hand shaking as I reach over and slowly unzip the back of my dress. I can feel his gaze weighing heavy over my skin as I cautiously begin to remove my long sleeve dress, the fabric rolling down my arms as his hungry eyes fuel my movements. I would never do such a thing if I was still in Dreadmoor, but there's something about being here, being with him.

The Boogeyman, here, watching me undress, as if I'm feeding him the sweetest treat. There's almost a kind of underlying power stitched within this naughty little act. I have something over him, something foreign and controlling, and I need to explore it and learn more.

I stop, resting the warm material of my dress across my breasts, my heart racing as I watch his breathing become more labored than before. "That's not all the way off," he states huskily.

"The rest will cost you more. One glove doesn't equal my whole dress, *sir*." He blinks and cocks his head. It's as if he expects me to follow whatever he says with no question or comeback. Like I'm... well, a creation. The problem is, I'm not like *her* other creations. There's very little blind faith with me and my Creator. She tells me to jump, and I will ask her why before she forces me to do it. It's the problem you run into while building someone from the scraps in a trash bin– you never know fully what you'll get.

"Nah." He raises up, now sitting on the edge of my bed. "You've got spunk, I'll give you that, Blue." Hearing him say my name melts me from my chest to my core. "But now, it's my turn. And my next question is very simple." He stands, stepping to my side, staring down at me, my head reaching just below his face. "Why don't we stop playing these childish games, and play something more?" He reaches his hand forward, stroking my lower lip as I release the tiniest moan. "Exciting." My eyes fall from him to the crackling fire, nervous and clueless as to what he means. Is he talking about adult games? Or,

adult games? I can feel my body shrinking into itself. “Oh, dollface,” he coos, rubbing my mouth with his thumb. It feels so good, I want to pull it into my mouth and suck on it. Do his glowing lights have a taste? Are they warmer than the rest of him?

“You know what I mean, don’t you?” My response is silence. What am I to say? *Sorry, I was kept in a room alone most of my existence and your thumb on my lips is the most sexual experience I’ve encountered.* Yeah that wouldn’t cause him to laugh. “Interesting,” he muses while gently removing his thumb while stepping back away from the bed. “Never met a virgin before.”

I recoil at the label. *Perfect. Of course he doesn’t want to play with me now. I’m inexperienced and have no idea what to do with him. A worthless virgin with no purpose, made from scraps and easily forgotten. Why would someone like the Boogeyman want me?*

The sound of the floorboards squeaking confirms my suspicion; he’s leaving. Glancing up, I force myself to watch him go, but instead, I’m caught by surprise–he’s standing in my room, shirtless and wearing only a pair of dark pants. He’s glowing, color shining from his face, down his strong neck, all along his muscular and well-built frame, leading down to his hips and disappearing into his pants. He runs his fluorescent fingers through his hair while giving me a far too confident smirk. “Come on, Blue. Don’t leave me hanging here. We *both* need to be undressed for this next game.”

Next game? What game? My brain is not here anymore; she’s completely shut off. All I can manage to do is stare at his beautifully glowing body while the urge to squeeze my thighs together becomes almost too much. He is too much. I’m way too inexperienced to be here with him like this, and yet... I won’t ask him to stop. I won’t look away, not even for a second for fear this might all end. He might wise up and leave, taking his colors and these heavy feelings with him.

Letting out a puff of air, he shakes his head. “Guess I’ll have to help you with that,” he whispers while approaching the bed. Firefly wastes no time, pushing me onto my back, my legs hanging over the edge of the bed as he leans over my body, his weight barely on me. I instinctively cover my chest, gripping the gathered material of my dress. His hand glides up my stomach, up my arm before trailing to my neck. I slightly lift my head, allowing him to grip the side of my neck softly as he runs his thumb roughly across my lower lip, dragging it as he pulls the soft tissue, forcing my mouth open. His other hand grips the fabric around my chest, tugging it as I remain motionless, allowing him to undress me.

My body burns with excitement as it comes alive for what feels like the first time. I revel in each second of his touch as he skates over my skin. “W-what game did you want to play?” I ask, whispering the

words at him, his thumb still on my face.

Firefly grins, his hair falling in front of his colorful face, his woodsy scent choking the air as the smell of him fills my lungs. “I’m going to do something, and you’re going to tell me if you do or don’t like it. Okay?” He leans close to my face, his hot breath against my ear as he speaks. “Don’t worry, I won’t make you do anything you don’t want to. If you don’t like something, just tell me to stop. Though, I have a feeling you’re going to enjoy the things I’m about to do.” Something slithers along the shape of my ear, forked and warm. “Let’s see just how innocent you really are.” The statement resembles a low growl, igniting something deep within me.

Firefly retreats from my face, releasing my neck as he stands between my legs, watching me. “I’ll go easy on you.” He winks as he runs his hands along the tops of my legs, squeezing with restraint. He moves from my knee and down toward my hip, gripping my thighs tightly. “How does that feel?” he asks, watching me for any kind of visual response.

I swallow, my throat burning from breathing so hard. “It’s okay.” *Okay? It feels fucking amazing.*

“Oh?” He raises a brow. “Just okay? I’ll try not to take offense. How about this?” he asks, wrapping his hands around my thighs, dipping toward my center, lightly spreading them further apart while his fingers brush over the skin around my throbbing pussy. I can feel my body fighting the building urges as he continues to run his hand along my thighs, taunting me.

“I-I’m okay,” I hesitate, struggling to control myself. This reminds me of my dream, adding to the unbearable feeling I have between my legs. My nipples harden, pushing against the material of my dress I’m still clutching.

“Stubborn little doll.” Firefly removes his hands, placing them on either side of my body as he leans in, the heat of his breath dancing along the skin of my neck as he speaks into me. “You may think you’re winning this.” He opens his mouth, running his forked tongue along my neck as I shudder, gasping as a hot current rushes through me. “But I’ve got a trick or two up my sleeve.” His tongue traces the underside of my chin, flicking my heated skin.

“Tricks aren’t fair,” I pant as he moves the thin material of my dress aside, exposing my right breast.

His low chuckle causes my center to tighten as he looks from my exposed breast to my eyes, his face, filled with cocky confidence as he speaks. “I’m the Boogeyman, and I don’t play fair.” Firefly’s eyes burn into me as he runs his split tongue along my breast, fixating on my nipple. The feel of his hot mouth and saliva along my skin is a shocking sensation. Gasping loudly, I grip the bedding tightly, causing

him to chuckle.

His tongue swirls around my hard nipple, “Ohhh,” he breathes out. “You like that pretty doll?” He flicks my nipple roughly, and I cry out. I can feel my pussy dripping, aching, and throbbing with something I had never felt before—at least, not to this extent. I can’t tell if what he’s doing is causing me pain or making my body beg for more, but I don’t want him to stop. I like this feeling, and I want more.

Firefly bites my nipple, causing me to scream out as my thighs tighten around his legs. “Careful,” he warns through clenched teeth. “You make noises like that, and this ride might make a turn you’re not ready for.” Instinctively, I lean into him, pushing against his mouth. “Oh?” He sucks my nipple, releasing it with a smack as he licks his lips and grips my face, forcing me to look into his eyes. “You better watch yourself, dollface. No matter how much you beg or how wet that greedy cunt of yours gets,” he snakes his free hand under my dress, running it along my center as I inhale sharply, the grip of his hand along my face tightening in response, “I don’t fuck with virgins.”

I can’t even process his words, as I’m too focused on not exploding from within. Something is building deep inside me, and I have no idea what it is, but I’m fighting it with all my strength. His finger remains on my center, drenched in my wetness, moving in a pleasing way. I can hear his breathing increasing as his finger moves faster and faster, his eyes watching me.

“Keep fighting it, dollface, but you’re no match for me.” He smiles, gently pushing his finger deeper inside my body. My breathing hitches at the intrusion, my body jolting as I try to fight whatever this foreign feeling is that’s consuming me. It’s an overwhelming urge and desire, drowning my tightening body as I scream out. I clench around his finger, my inner walls pulsing and squeezing him, my body rubbing against the soft skin of his palm as the world explodes with... *color*—color I’ve only seen on him. My entire room has burst to life as I memorize every shade and hue before me, including those on his face as my heart nearly gives out from the euphoric feeling.

Not a moment later, my body is slowly beginning to relax, and I notice the color beginning to quickly fade away; the only brightness to the world remaining is my Firefly.

No, bring it back.

He slowly removes his fingers, my warm wetness dripping from his skin as he moves his hand to his face, breathing heavy. “Told you I’d win.” He winks, running his snake-like tongue along his fingers, tasting my glowing fluid. The color of it resembles one of the many inked on his body. “Next time, I’ll let you taste mine, if you’re a good girl.”

My head drops with exhaustion, sweat covering my skin like a

glistening layer of dew. My body quivers with each breath as I try to catch my racing heart. The memory of his touch lingers on my skin, making me ache for more. I don't want him to leave; no, I crave for him to stay and make me feel this way again. I yearn for the colors and feelings that surged through me in those fleeting moments.

A creaking sound jolts me out of my daze and I quickly raise my head, scanning around the room. In the dim light, I realize that I’m all alone in my bedroom. A wave of sadness washes over me, overshadowing the euphoric sensations that still linger on my skin. Desperately, I search every corner of the room, hoping to find some trace of him, but he's gone.

Feeling lost and empty, I curl up under the covers, clutching my stuffed rat tightly against my chest. As I close my eyes, I replay every sensation of his touch in my mind, reliving the ecstasy until it slowly lulls me into a peaceful slumber.

Chapter 6

The BOOGEYMAN

I've lost my motherfucking mind. I mean, in all honesty, I can't tell you if I really had any semblance of a grasp on my sanity to begin with, but after the other night, after that dangerous game I played with that innocent little doll... Well, not *so* innocent.

A groan pushes through my clenched teeth as I absently tug on my hardening cock while staring up at my fluorescent ceiling. The only thing I can think about is the noises she made and the way her body felt. I can't get them out of my mind. She's so shy and inexperienced yet yearning to feel and please. The way she put her trust into my hand... Oh if she only knew just how bad of an idea that really is.

"Fuck," I growl, staring at my painful erection. My cock, like the rest of me, is inked and glowing. *A glowing green cock, how fucking marvelous.* My entire body is covered in a multitude of fluorescent colors, but my cock just had to be green—not that anyone has complained about the color. I'm large enough and skilled enough to turn potential giggles into gasps and moans relatively quickly.

Would she laugh? I can't help but wonder how Blue would react if she saw my cock, the glowing green reflecting in her shiny button eyes as it neared her face. I run my fingers over the sharp, tattooed lines that cause the glow while imagining they're her fingers instead. I release a hiss before gripping my shaft and running my hand up and down. Spitting into my palm, I imagine it's her fluorescent wetness as I return to my cock, thinking of her perfect tits, that sweet, plump set of lips, and fuck, that other set between her thick thighs where that swollen clit I ache to suck on awaits me.

Her arousal has become a dangerous addiction, taunting me long after I left that night. Fuck, even now, all I want is to destroy that innocent doll. I want to soil her, pull out her deepest, darkest, most depraved desires. I want to see what she's hiding behind that blush and that virgin shield, and I want to make her *mine.*

"Fuck, Blue!" I growl out her name, shocking myself as I come harder than I have in a long time. My body shakes with aftershocks as my warm, glowing green cum rolls from my cock and down across my hand. Imagine the color our come could create if mixed; her glowing blue and my neon green, swirling together as it flows from our bodies drenching our skin.

Sighing, I feel the same feeling return that always does since the night I came to the sight of her sleeping, naked and innocent. I need to stop this. I need to stop her. She isn't just a virgin, but a creation, one that will destroy me if I deviate from the plan, which is precisely what I'm doing, sitting here with my wet cock in hand, obsessing over that doll.

I still clean up and prepare to go out and check on her, to sit outside her window and make sure she's okay. Because despite me trying my damndest to get her to fall under my spell, I fear I might be falling under hers too.

PULLING my blade out of one of Stingy Jack's henchmen, I let them drop to the ground beside the sign to the taxidermy house Blue resides in. I knew it would only be a matter of time before that skeletal fucker figured out not only that Blue had survived out here in Nightmare, but where she was hiding out.

I leave the henchmen's body to head toward my tree, making a mental note to have Havoc dispose of it later. Last thing any of us need is Stingy Jack finding it just outside Blue's home.

I jump up the branches and nearly stumble off when I reach Blue's window, taken back by what I see. The window is open, which it never is, and her usually *somewhat*-clean room is now a disaster. Furs, blankets, and papers are thrown everywhere, the smaller furniture tossed upside down, as if someone rummaged through the place. My heart pounds in my chest as I climb in and look for any sign of her. My thoughts are scrambled, and I feel anxiety and a sense of dread wash over me as I try to piece together what happened. I try to slow my breathing so I can hear better. Even though my mask slightly muffles everything, I can hear her soft cries. The sound grabs my attention as I race out of the room and into the dark, musty hallway.

"Blue?" I call out, doing a piss-poor job hiding the anxiety I feel. *What happened? Was that fucker I killed a lookout? Does someone have her? Are they hurting her? Where is she?* Spiderwebs kiss the eyes of my mask causing me to swat them aside as I frantically search for her. *I need her alive.* Rage fills me as I start kicking doors, looking for her. "Dollface! Talk to me!" I roar through the house, desperately trying to locate her.

"In here," her muffled voice breaks from the opposite end of the hall. I turn around and rush to the other side of the hall, forcing open door after door until I come to the last. I whip open the door to what

appears to be a small office. The room is dusty, torn apart, and filled with silence—minus a faint sniffling. My eyes desperately search the room as something moving catches my attention. I look to see her tiny blue fingers wiggling from under the desk. *There you are.* I run over, dropping to my knees as I reach her.

"What happened?" I pant out, stunned by the amount of relief flooding me when I see her look up at me. She's safe and appears not to be injured.

"Firefly! Someone stole him!" she wails, falling into my chest, her body leaning against me as her fresh tears seep through the burlap. *What should I do?* She buries herself deeper into my itchy suit, her cheeks reddening from the rough material as I sit, stunned and slightly aroused by her touching me. The smell of her sweet scent chokes me as I freeze, unsure of what to do. *Do I... do I pat her?*

"Stole who?" I ask, hesitating before smacking her back repeatedly. *This can't be right. There is no way this is comforting her.* I feel so out of my element, and I suddenly find myself wishing there were someone here I needed to handle. Handling is something I'm good at—great at. But patting a sobbing woman's back? Yeah, I'd rather have a knife set on fire and rammed up into my dickhole than deal with this.

"Ow." She winces, pushing my hand off her before burrowing herself further into my chest. *Okay, back pats are out, but it did get her to move closer to me.* My dick is definitely calling that a win. "Mr. Whiskers. Someone came in here and stole my journal *and* Mr. Whiskers." She starts sobbing again, and I feel my skin crawl with an immensely uncomfortable feeling. Seriously, there are men out there who can wrap their arms around a distressed woman and say all the right things. I currently want to put my palm in her face and shove her away.

"You gotta stop doing that," I almost plead with her as she continues to press into me, almost knocking me over.

"Doing what?" she says between her sniffles.

"That." I point to her pouty face. "I'm about to break something in half if I have to keep listening to it, and I can't explain why." Her upper lip curls downward as she glares at me.

"I didn't ask you to come here. This is *my* home. I can mourn the loss of my friend in my home if I want. I don't go to the rock you live under and tell you to stop being all dark and broody." Her sharp tongue is enough to cause a feeling I'm far too familiar with to stir in my pants. *Feisty*.

"Okay," I sigh, trying to remain in control of my dick. "Who is *Mr. Whiskers*?" Her full bottom lip begins to quiver, and fucking God I'm going to jump out of the window behind me if she doesn't stop.

"He's... my only friend, besides Havoc, and now," she sniffles.

“He’s gone. My little mouse!” She sobs, and it hits me. *Little mouse? Wait... is she crying over the fucking rat?*

“The dead rat?” I question, and she rears back as if I hit her.

“Rat? God, you’re such an insensitive asshole!” She shoves my chest with a large huff. I move back, pretending as though she moved me but only to give her some satisfaction. I can tell she put her all into that shove. She stands up and marches out of the office, fuming and a complete mess. “I’m so glad you lack every emotion possible! Must be so nice not to care! Now, if you’ll excuse me, I’m going to go mourn the loss of the closest thing I’ve ever had to family!” *God, are all dolls this sensitive?*

As she leaves, I sit on the floor and think about what she said. *That nasty dead thing is all she has?* Fuck, I don’t want them, but I at least have those three fucks at the treehouse. She won’t stop crying...

“Goddamn it,” I huff, realizing what I have to do as I quickly stand, walking out of the room and running down the steps to the front door, slamming it shut. I should’ve never saved her to begin with. Had I not, I wouldn’t now be on a fucking search and rescue mission for a half decayed fucking rodent. *What the hell kind of magic is this doll using on me?*

“PLEASE!” The grotesque man’s screams are nothing but blurred noise at this point as I slam his face into the fence post, the wood splintering into his flesh as blood stains the air. Gripping the man between my hands, I twist his neck, breaking it and silencing him, breathing heavily from the use of my strength. *I’m going to die of heatstroke in this fucking suit!*

I stare at the sign at the town’s edge: *Welcome Home.* The phrase is crudely hand carved into the wooden planks, aged by the countless years of its presence haunting this world. Despite the endless cold night, I’m overheating in my suit, taking off the mask as I try to bring down the anxiety I feel with the feel of the crisp air. As I discard my suit, I feel naked, especially when the ever-present moon shines over me, causing my skin to come alive. The nearby townspeople take notice of my presence, as I knew they would. I’m not known to show myself like this, preferring to sneak along the dark shadows of the world. After all, there’s only one of me, and despite my size and my strength, I’m not a fool to believe I can take on the entire town alone. Especially when I know I'm a beacon for whoever the Spinster is hiding, watching for any sign of me.

And yet, here I am, stepping into the lion's den fully exposed. What choice do I have, though? I can't have Blue this upset, I just fucking can't. I'm pissed off over the fact that I'm this upset, but that doesn't change the fact that I now have to venture through the town of ghostly, demonic souls and lost creations and find that fucking rat myself. I know Stingy Jack stole it. I know the man I killed earlier at Blue's home was sent there to tell her where to find that rat, forcing her to travel here, which confuses me. How does Stingy Jack know that rat mattered to her? Blue never took that stupid thing out with her, meaning someone must've been watching her in her home. My stomach drops. *Us*. *They must be watching us.* I have been so distracted, so consumed with her, that I left us exposed and vulnerable and hadn't seen them. This realization fills me with a new rush of protective anger that again I'm beyond pissed off about.

"I know you're out here!" I yell into the growing crowd. I hear the murmurs they whisper to themselves, spitting as I step by. *Monster, freak, Dreadmoor's bitch.* I ignore them as Stingy Jack walks through the parting crowd, his grin exaggerated by the skeletal ink staining his face.

"Well, if it isn't the big bad Boogeyman himself, coming to our little town," he drawls as he looks past me to see the dead man behind me.

"Always were one for the theatrics, weren't you?" He places his hands on his narrow hips, delighted by my unexpected visit.

"You're one to talk," I huff out while squaring up. He may have the height advantage, the man standing at almost seven feet, but I'm faster and stronger. "Give it to me, and I'll go." A smirk graces his mouth as he gives me an amused stare.

"Why, give you what?" He cocks his head to one side.

"You know what I'm here for," I hiss out. "You stole something. A... pet, from the doll. Give it to me."

Stingy Jack snorts as he snaps his long fingers, and a short, pudgy man rushes over with a satchel. "Well I must say, I didn't expect a toy to go enlisting the Boogeyman's help to get *this* back," he muses while reaching into the bag and pulling out the dead thing. "What an odd task for such a big man," he mocks.

"She didn't. I'm here on my own." There's a loud howl off in the distance, and the amused look on his face drops. My own stomach twists as we all stop and listen. *Nightmares*. Nightmares are dangerous, haunting creatures that take no specific form but hunt every soul present all the same. They're loyal only to themselves, killing any and all in their path with no care other than to soak this wretched world in their evil darkness. Even the Spinster herself struggles to control their endless killing, thus casting them here for the rest of us to suffer

the evolution of her mistake while she pulls their strings from the safety of Dreadmoor. There are many nightmares plaguing this world, but there's one in particular I strive to avoid, the largest and most dangerous nightmare of them all: The Widow.

"You and your stupid glowing marks are bringing them here! Fucking monster!" he roars, throwing the bag and rat at me while he and the rest of the town panic, running to hide. They snuff out their fires, bar their windows, and lock their doors, leaving me, the only source of light, out in the open. *Fucking perfect.*

I grab the satchel and look at the rat. "Fucking gross," I shiver as the flimsy, rotting thing flops over when I pick it up. Never again. After this doll is gone, I will never help another woman again. New rule: everyone dies. I'm *not* saving men, women, children, or floppy rodents anymore. Stuffing it into the satchel, I strap the bag across my body and run to the entrance to put on my suit, but it's too late.

A sudden, heavy force slams into me as I feel a clawing slash across my chest, so quickly that I can't react. I step back, groaning as I face a shadow nightmare in the form of a giant wolf staring back at me. The creature snaps its sharpened jaws, drool dripping from its mouth as it falls to the ground like smoke, its black button eyes locking onto me. The wolf-like nightmare raises its head and howls loudly, the sound hurting my ears at the high pitched screech. I know exactly what it's doing—it's alerting the others.

"That doll is going to owe me after this," I grumble to myself, bracing for what I'm about to do.

I dive onto the large, shadowy creature, grappling its back as it snaps at my face. We wrestle for a minute, both of us straining before I'm finally able to use my strength and body weight to twist its large body around as we roll down the hill and land with myself on top. The nightmare tries to claw at my face, continuing to bite in my direction as my fingers curl along its slimy jaws, forcing them open wide. It begins to whimper, desperately trying to break free as I strain, groaning as my muscles burn and I use every ounce of my strength to rip its jaw open as it releases the most unnatural cry, calling the others near. I need to kill it now. I lift the nightmare's head and slam its skull into the hard earth as I begin to slam it against the rocky surface, over and over again, watching as bloody bits of its brain begin to drip out from its ears and eyes, its muffled cries choking on its own blood as the sound of its bones crunch and crumble beneath my strength. I ram the nightmare's shadow-like face into the rock one last time as it shatters within its smokey skin, its life quickly fading away.

Fucking finally.

Sitting back, I take a breath before grabbing its lifeless throat and

looking into the black button eyes.

"You lose, bitch," I pant before ripping the eyes out with my bare hands. The eyes allow the Spinster to see into this world, to see what her creations see, which is why I always take them. Once they are removed from the body, they're useless. Call it sick and twisted, but I prefer to keep them like little trophies, in jars tucked away in my treehouse. On various occasions, I like to pull the glass containers out and line them up, all eyes on me as I jerk off, imagining that the old Spinster can somehow still see me through the lifeless buttons, taunting her with how alive I am and enjoying my time in the world she cast me into, coming all on my own. Without her. Because I never needed her.

I stumble over to my suit, hissing at the burning sensation as I look down at the gash across my chest. It's superficial but still fucking hurts. I slip into my suit, the material irritating my chest, and throw my mask on before getting ready to take off when I see the fucking rat has fallen out of the bag now under my suit, laying on the ground, fucking taunting me. *Goddamn it.* It must've fallen out of my bag while I fought the nightmare. Exhaling, I raise my head and groan. *All this work for a fucking doll.* I snatch the rat from the ground, my chest aching as I do so. It flops as I stand, causing me to shudder. I get it; I live with and eat bugs. I just slammed a creature's brains out without batting an eye. *This* shouldn't bother me, but we all have our limits, and this limp dick, stinky-ass, partially decayed vermin is the thing I can't handle.

"I'm so glad you lack every emotion possible! Must be so nice not to care!" I mock while shaking the semi-stuffed rat. When I get back, I'm literally rubbing this rodent in her pretty blue face. Don't care? Ha! I don't see anyone else out here risking fucking death just so she doesn't feel sa—

I stop running as my thoughts hit me. Do I... actually care? No, no, I don't *care.* I just... She's pleasant to see naked, and I feel like I'm going to see less of that if she's sad. Yeah, that has to be it. I don't *care*. I am not made to care, to love. I feel nothing but anger, and all I want is to win the Spinster's game.

With that decided, I begin to walk through the woods. I need to drop this dead thing in my hand off to her without her knowing I did it, and then go home. The last thing I need right now is her thinking I care, especially being a needy little virgin. However, Blue thinking such a thing might actually be beneficial. This would get me closer to her, enough so that she may even start to fall faster, and then, I can find out what she knows.

Despite the logic behind it, something in my gut twists and tells me this isn't the way to go about it.

AS I APPROACH the door of her bedroom, I hear another voice, stopping me in my tracks as I lean against the wooden barrier and listen.

"Please, Havoc," Blue's voice is urgent and desperate. "I need to learn. I'll do anything you ask, just please, have sex with me." My body immediately jolts and stiffens at her words. *What the fuck? Blue's asking Havoc to sleep with her? Why?*

My fists ball at my sides as my muscles flex with anger, the stupid rotting rat still in my grasp. I had gone all the way to Stingy Jack's and rescued her precious fucking vermin, and she's here, playing with Havoc—playing me!

"Hush, dolly," Havoc hisses. "You speak in nonsense. Havoc will do no such thing. Havoc does not share toys, and you are not my toy." *Damn straight she's not yours*. "Silly dolly, boss said no more orgies." She cackles as I growl quietly to myself.

"What's an *orgy*?" Blue struggles to say the word, her innocence obvious and oddly soothing. Havoc booms with laughter, taunting Blue. It upsets me, knowing Blue must feel embarrassed by the whole conversation. *Enough of this bullshit.*

I swing the bedroom door open, startling both women as they stare at me. Havoc's grinning, her sharpened teeth fully visible as Blue gawks at me, her cheeks burning a bright red as she sits on her bed, her dress unzipped and her shoulders bare. I quietly approach her, reaching my hand out as I offer her the stuffed rat. She gasps, quickly fixing her dress as her hands snatch the ridiculous dead rodent up. Squeezing it tight, beaming with joy. I can't help but grin at the pure joy and happiness washing over her face.

"Oh! Mr. Whiskers!" She hugs the gross dead thing tight, stroking its sunken face. "You seem to have a little split here," she states. Blue pulls a needle from her bun and a spool of thread from a pocket in her dress, intending to mend the dead rodent.

"You just... keep a needle and thread on you at all times?" I question as she threads her needle with ease while crossing her right leg over her left, causing the hem of her dress to slide up.

"Of course," she hums and taps her stitches on her thigh. "Never know when you might need to be stitched up." She beams up at me before biting the thread off the rat. I want to fucking retch, but fuck, she looks so cute...

Cute? Goddammit it, that's it. I'm driving my fist into something and then having Havoc kick my ass.

“Big boss bug glows!” Havoc shoots from the floor, rushing to the foot of the bed as she points at my mask, laughing out loud. Blue is too consumed by the rodent to even notice.

“I always glow,” I growl, pulling my mask down further.

Havoc snickers, lowering her hand. “Not like this.” I tilt my head, a low rumble vibrating in my chest as I silently warn her to back away. She continues to grin her sinister smile, backing up to the window as she watches us.

“Thank you!” Blue cries out gleefully.

I shrug, crossing my arms. “Well, the sound of you crying wasn’t something I wanted to hear. Besides, it’s not every day a doll calls me an insensitive asshole.”

“I’m sorry!” she blurts out, covering her mouth. “I didn’t mean it. I-I just—”

I raise a hand, silencing her. Her apology is almost as uncomfortable as her crying. “Don’t do that.”

She nods, “I can’t believe you rescued him.” Her eyes fall to the rodent, tracing its button eye. “For me.”

We both sit in silence as I wonder if I’ve done the right thing. Surely now, she feels special, knowing I did such a stupid thing, like rescuing a dead fucking rodent and returning it to her. Part of me wishes she’d throw herself at me, surrender that amazing fucking body of hers to me for such a heroic display. I mean, I wouldn’t be so opposed to that, but for some reason, seeing her happy warms me. It’s almost enough to forget about fucking her... *Oh, what the fuck*? I shake my head. *Get your shit together!*

“I think Havoc and I should go.” I stumble back, confused by my own feelings as Blue nods. *I need to get out of here, now.*

“Boss seems tangled in his own web,” Havoc whispers as I near the window. I ignore her words, quickly pushing the thick glass aside as I slither through and out onto the thick branch. Havoc shadows me, climbing like a spider down the tree as we both stand outside on the dry ground beneath the tree.

“What the hell was that?” I demand, pointing back up to Blue’s window.

“What?” she asks, cocking her head as her face shows nothing but a confused, innocent soul. She’s good at playing, but I’m better.

I groan loudly, gripping the edges of my mask. “Were you about to fuck Blue when I walked in?” I yell, waving my arms around. Havoc bursts out in laughter as I stand there fuming. *Okay, so usually I’m better.*

“Silly boss man,” she teases, pissing me off more. Havoc grabs her stomach as she bellows over. “Poor dolly,” she hesitates between her sick laughter. “Wanted to be deflowered. Nothing more.” She

continues to laugh uncontrollably. “Boss should watch his words. Dolly thinks he hates virgins and wants to be one no more. So she asks Havoc to fix it.” Havoc falls onto her back, kicking her legs in the air as she continues to cackle.

Blue asked Havoc to sleep with her because I said I didn’t fuck with virgins. *God damnit.*

“Boss, better be quick.” Havoc wipes a tear from her human eye. “Dolly may become someone else's toy if boss takes too long.” She stands, wiping the dirt from her body. “Would hate to see boss lose yet *another* game.”

“I’m not going to lose,” I growl, glancing up at Blue’s window. “I just—” I stop, thinking about what I need to do. I retrieve the glowing set of green dice from my suit, staring at their faded surface in my hand. *Odd, I let her fuck someone else and get it over with. Even…*

I hesitate.

I do it myself.

Havoc slithers to my side, her eyes peeking above my hand as she eyes the dice. “Ooooh, boss is gambling the doll’s innocence, I see,” she hisses. I throw the dice, unsure of which way I want them to land. They roll, bouncing against the dry soil before slowly stopping just a few feet away. Havoc falls to her hands and knees, scuttering to the dice as she eyes the numbers on top, squealing a high-pitched squeal that makes me jolt. “Snake eyes,” she taunts the words as she turns to look at me with a grin.

Fuck.

Chapter 7

Blue

The never-ending night is always dark,
Vibrant beams of the moon my only light.
It guides my feet and reveals my true path,
Carrying me deep through the cold, dark woods.
The world is dark and full of shadows,
Lacking the palette of any true life.
My curiosity grows with each step,
Increasing, much like the beat of my heart.
Where shall these woods lead me, I do not know,
But something draws me into the unknown.

My fingertips brush delicately over the various grayscale flowers, their beauty matching the dull color of my skin, blending into the colorless world around me. The sound of twigs breaking catches me off guard as I turn to face him, my Firefly.

"You seem lost, dollface." His muffled voice slithers through the thick burlap mask he always wears, concealing his beautiful inked face from our creator and her little play things. It's frustrating because he's so magnificent to look at.

"Not lost," I sigh, sliding my platform shoe against the dry dirt, shifting my weight. "Just passing the endless time." Truthfully, I long to see the world come to life again, the colors burned into my mind as I ached to relive that sensation. How was it even possible? I stroked the dried petal, wondering what color it really is.

He tilts his head, watching me. "If you're so bored," he begins while stepping closer, closing the distance between. His covered hand gently tips my chin up towards him as the moon burns bright behind his silhouette. "We could..." He leans close, close enough his face could touch mine as it burns with the proximity. "Play another game." *Game*. My eyes sparkle at the word.

I can almost hear his lips curling into a smile. A game doesn't

sound too unappealing, especially with him. My face heats at the memories of our last game. *What harm could a little fun be?* I nod, silently answering him as he slowly removes his hand and leans close, his mask scraping the skin of my cheek as he whispers into my ear.

"Then I suggest you run." His words send a wave of warmth through my body, my skin prickling at the touch of his breath against my ear. *Run? What game are we playing now? Hide and seek?* I jolt back, stepping away as he watches me.

"1..." he begins to count, "2..." An extreme rush of excitement washes over me as I watch him, standing there in his suit, slightly tilting his head.

I turn on my heel, bolting into the dark woods, excitement and adrenaline burning within me. I can't help but smile, the cold air scratching my face as I race through the trees. His counting slowly fades away as the sound of the nightlife grows and plays around me, mixing with the immense sound of my rapidly beating heart. I need to find a hiding spot, fast.

I continue to run, enjoying the odd sense of freedom I feel as I sprint deeper into the woods, frantically searching the darkness for a spot to hide when my eyes land on a structure off in the distance. It's like a house, but smaller, abandoned and old, as if decaying for centuries, forgotten way out here. A treehouse, possibly? Something about it calls to me, enticing me to stop and stare despite needing to keep running.

"8..." His voice carries with the wind, inching closer with each second. *He's so close*. I glance back in the direction of the treehouse and swallow hard, hesitating before stalking nearer. "I'm coming for you, Blue," he sings in a tone that sets fire to my core. If I didn't love the thrill of games so much, I'd just let him find me... but I want to win. *Need* to win.

As I step up to the outside entrance of the twisted treehouse, the weathered door squeaks open by itself as if beckoning me inside, its ominous mystery seducing me into a trance as I step through the doorframe and enter the pitch-black home. As soon as I'm fully inside, the door slams shut, startling me. A faraway, eerie cackle echoes from the depths of the house, setting me on edge as I carelessly continue deeper into the abyss, cautiously curious. My hands reach out, feeling the emptiness around me, my feet shuffling as I carefully move further into the daunting treehouse, unsure of what to expect.

The scurrying sound of bugs and the wooden floor creaking beneath my feet create an odd berceuse that feeds my curiosity, drawing me toward something ahead, something that stands out amongst the shadows. My eyes slowly adjust to the shadows as a glowing orb takes shape. *It's... a moth?* My feet stop, and I'm stunned

by the impossible thing before me. It isn't an ordinary, grayscale moth. No, it's... glowing in *color*. My eyes immediately sparkle as the addictive excitement I felt once before returns, burning with desire. "How?" I breathe out, feeling an overwhelming urge to cry at this revelation. Aside from that night with Firefly, I haven't seen color freely in Nightmare. How is this possible?

The fluorescent bug flutters its wings, casting a light from its body as it moves, the fluorescent color dripping from its wings like glitter in the night as it dances above my head. I release a light giggle, completely consumed by its magical allure. The moth lands on the tip of my nose, gently moving its wings as it stares into my soul. It's like looking into heaven itself, the color beaming across my face, absorbing the darkness around it. My hand slowly lifts as I attempt to pet the little critter. My movements must startle the bug, as it shoots from my face and flies away, swirling down what appears to be a staircase. The light begins to fade as it quickly disappears from view. "Wait!" My weak whisper comes out as more of a plea as I quickly chase after it. The bright moth bobs just out of sight, guiding me with its cool light as I descend the stairs, following it.

As I near the bottom of the staircase, the color has seemingly grown, magnifying in both hue and brightness, stunning me as I stop, reaching the floor at the foot of the stairs. I realize that the little moth isn't alone. It has flown into a room of some kind. The walls are drenched in bugs and critters of every shade and color. I can't even begin to describe the marvel before me, each bug and insect glowing in a vibrant saturation I've never experienced. It's absolutely breathtaking, the phenomenal beauty of it all shocking me to my core. I gasp, overwhelmed by the unparalleled sight, my heart fluttering like the wings of the very moth who guided me here as it lands atop my hand, once again showering me in its light.

"How magnificent you are," I say softly, still fighting back tears of glee. "All of you," I whisper, eyeing the plethora of living colors.

My brilliant surroundings have me completely distracted, my thoughts far away from the game I'm in the middle of playing, focusing only on the miracle before me. That is, until a soft creak from behind me grabs my attention, my back instantly straightening at the sound. As I turn, the moth flies from my hand, taking with it the color of the surrounding bugs. Like a candle snuffed out, leaves me in a thick layer of darkness. Heavy breathing emanates from the shadows, sending a chill down my spine, a distant cackle echoing, with hushed voices whispering to themselves. I'm not alone anymore.

"H-hello?" I call out gently, my voice wavering in fear and uneasiness.

The breathing increases, growing louder as the sound of heavy

footsteps near me. *Was it him? Did he find me?*

"Hello?" I whisper again, reaching my hand out into the dark abyss.

As something grabs my wrist, the moth returns, its wings once again illuminating, revealing *his* burlap mask as he stands directly in front of me, his hand holding me tight in his power grip. "I-I guess... I lose," I say hesitantly with a breathy chuckle. The energy of the room has shifted with his presence into something more... timid.

"How did you find this house?" he demands as he yanks me closer, a faint gasp escaping my lips as the moth drifts from my skin into the air above us drenching our bodies in its glow. "Tell me!" he nearly snarls, and for the first time, I feel fearful of him. *What have I done?*

"I-I just came across this place. I-it was just here, in-n the woods." The frantic worry in his voice is foreign to me, and I feel a wave of unease and nervousness setting in. "W-what is this place?" I ask, eyeing the moth above, its glow warm and calming. "It's beautiful, so alive and filled with the most marvelous color." I smile, laughing softly as he watches me, his head cocking to one side. "But I don't understand. How can I see it here but not out in the world?" I gaze upon the moth as my eyes sparkle with life. "This place reminds me of your skin." I look around, wishing for the bugs to ignite once more. "Filled with color, color I long to breathe into my eyes, filling my soul with its vibrant life and meaning. I envy you, Firefly. You can see it at all times and bask in its glory while I see only the dullness of it all, completely sightless to the beauty hidden behind the grayscale of my eyes." I try to hold back tears as I motion around at the absent color of the walls. "It's simply breathtaking."

"Interesting..." He slowly releases my wrist while stepping back. The moth above swirls in a loop, fluttering back to the stairs, disappearing as he grabs the edges of his mask, its light fading away, leaving us once again in the silent dark. A sadness fills me in the absence of the vibrant color, my shoulders sagging. "Hang on," he sighs, an overwhelming amount of color immediately glowing in the dark from beneath his mask as he lifts it from his face. "That better?"

My hands shoot up to cover my mouth as a large smile pulls at my lips. He's beautiful. Handsome and strong, with striking features but it's his skin that has me under the spell. The countless markings etched across his face and neck, leaving little of his skin bare, glowing in every color imaginable. He isn't just kissed by the color. He *is* color.

"Firefly," I choke out, too enamored by the sight to form words. Unlike in my room before, here, in the darkness, his color is magnified, burning brighter than before. It's as if I can see it more clearly, the dusty layer of the Nightmare world absent, allowing me to focus in on his allure. I step closer, my fingertips reaching for his face,

hesitating as I gently touch the bright, stitched ink that grows from the edges of his lips across his cheek. My hand moves up and joins the other, touching the opposite side, feeling his skin as I stare at him. “You’re absolutely beautiful.” My cheeks burn as I realize what I whispered aloud.

He chuckles, his mouth curling into what I assume is a rare grin as he drops his mask. He places his hands across mine, taking his time as they rest there, feeling me before delicately removing them from his face. “If this is all it takes to impress you,” he teases, removing his gloves, “then you’re about to really freak out.” His hands glow immensely, the same as his face. My eyes trail over the designs, really noticing the designs and details unlike before, noting the bright ink that stretches from his fingernails to his wrists and continues under his suit. My heart races, watching as he slowly removes the burlap, his built bare chest matching his hands and face, the various swirling colors and designs stretching across every inch of his skin. His name I chose for him is perfectly fitting, as he truly is a Firefly, burning bright in the darkness of this world.

“Firefly,” I manage out through my shock, watching as he spins, showing off his markings like a critter dancing before its mate. His back is covered in an abundance of bugs, each perfectly needled into his flesh, glowing as if alive and perched upon his skin. “H-how?” He chuckles again, this one different, lacking any warmth or humor.

“Makes you an easy target for hunters if you’re glowing.” His voice is short and crisp, and I know now it’s our creator’s doing. Part of her game, I’m sure.

“I never want to look away,” I breathe out, and I mean it. His beauty is unlike anything I’ve ever seen, and that’s just without the colors. “What do you call this one?” I ask, pointing to the spider tattoo on his thick forearm.

“A spider?” he says in confusion. I chuckle lightly, shaking my head.

“No!” I hiss playfully. “The color, Firefly.” I lower my eyes, picking at my nails as I speak. “I-I don’t know the differences between the colors. I know the names; green, pink, blue—” I stop, wondering if I look the same as my name. “But I don’t know what name belongs to what color. So, if you don’t mind... which is it?” His cheeks stain slightly, and he almost looks embarrassed as realization hits him.

“Fuck, you really have no idea. How tragic.” He reaches for my hand, gently grasping it as he delicately runs my fingertips over the spider, the design slightly raised on his skin. “That’s red.” His voice is soft as he trails my hand up his thick, powerful arm to his shoulder, a skull sitting there. “Yellow,” to his strong, firm chest where a bird flies. “Purple.” I hear the quickening of his breath as I free my hand

from his and travel my fingertips along his body, running them up his neck and back to his face, quietly repeating the colors as he speaks them, learning their meaning. I add my other hand, grazing my thumbs over either side of his mouth with hesitation as I feel the raised skin, my eyes meeting his.

"And this?" I ask, my voice breathy and foreign to me. His eyes seem to be staring directly at my mouth as he swallows before saying, "Green." *Green.* I really like this color, more so than the rest. Firefly seems to be covered more in the green than any other.

"Where is the color blue?" I ask, our eyes locking on one another as my own heart slowly begins to pick up pace. He gives me a small laugh as his hand reaches out and gently grabs a lock of my hair.

"I'm looking at it." He holds the lock in his glowing hand, his own color igniting the hue of mine as I see the color of my hair for the first time.

"I am blue!" I squeal with an almost child-like excitement. "Wow." I marvel at the strands, twirling them in my hands, the brightness visible only in his light as the rest of me remains dull as before. But in this moment, I don't care. I am blue, and blue is beautiful. "It's such a pretty color," I whisper, mesmerized by it.

"Yes, it is." My eyes find his again, noticing the tiny flakes of neon green sparkling in his irises. He is beautiful. Before I can process what's happening, Firefly leans in close as his lips capture mine, my breathing captured by the unexpected moment. His arm presses against my back, forcing me closer as my body begins to melt into his, enjoying my first kiss. It's gentle at first as he allows me to get used to it, the moment soaked in sweetness. I whimper, pressing my lips against his as his hand holds my jaw and angles me upward before pressing with more force with fingers making me open my mouth. I do as I'm silently told and allow him access as he invades me, and when his tongue meets mine, I gasp and shove away.

"What the..." I look at his cocky smirk as his tongue darts out of his mouth, licking my saliva off his bottom lip. His snake tongue. "So I wasn't imagining it the other night? A snake?" I breathe out, touching my lips as he chuckles. Surprisingly, I'm not scared or terrified. I am instead, highly and erratically aroused.

"I mean... " He yanks the side of my dress, pulling me back into his grasp. "I've been called that a time or two." He flashes his tongue through a smile. "I can be your snake if you want, dollface." The split tip of his tongue wiggles teasingly between his teeth. Something snaps inside as I feel my urges taking control of my body. I reach my hand up, playfully grabbing his dark hair and pulling his face down to mine as I smile.

"I prefer Firefly," I whisper. His tongue slithers forward, licking the

front of teeth. I let out a soft whimper as his hand grips my face, forcing me against his. The aggression and pain from his fingers is almost too pleasurable. His tongue enters my mouth once more, and this time, I welcome it, my tongue wrapping around his, causing him to growl like an animal, deep into my mouth. He presses himself against me, his hands moving all along my body as I gasp at the feel of his hard cock pressing against my stomach.

"I told you," he whispers huskily, gripping the underside of my thighs, lifting me as he wraps my legs around his waist. I continue to kiss him, my lips traveling along his glowing skin as he moves, carrying me away. "You get to name me. Just make sure it's one you're going to want to be screaming in ecstasy, because I'm not approving of your praises to higher powers when I'm the one delivering your pleasure." The way my body feels, tangled with his, I'm unable to fully process what he's saying. I simply want *more*—need more.

I cry out as he presses me roughly against the rock wall of his glowing room, the pain nipping at the feeling between my legs as I call out his name. "Firefly," I pant, instinctively rolling my hips to grind against him, chasing the growing feeling. "Firefly," I whisper again, digging my nails into his skin as I follow the mindless urges and bite his ear with my teeth, tugging it roughly.

"Fuuuck!" he groans as his eyes roll back when I grind again. "For a virgin, you sure seem to know what you're doing."

"I don't want to be a virgin," I admit, and I feel his body stiffen around me. He looks at me, his brows furrowing while looking over me as if trying to catch me in a lie, he won't though; I'm not lying.

"Doll-"

"Please," I interrupt, kissing his stunned lips again. "Please, I want this. I want *you*." I whimper, nipping at his slack jaw. I squeeze my legs around his body, ready to surrender myself to him. The Boogeyman. My Firefly.

"Blue, you don't know what you're asking. This is different from our game—" He stops, looking conflicted. I feel a surge of embarrassment run through me, my body loosening its grip. *Does he not want me this way?* My cheeks burn, giving away my emotions as I lean back against the cold wall.

"Oh," I manage, my voice small. "I-I'm sorry, I didn't mean to... I just– I should go." I try to lower my legs, try to move, but his grip becomes steel as he holds me firm, his arms flexing with such raw power. If he wasn't holding me, I might've fallen to my knees right then and there.

"Look at me," he whispers. I don't listen to his request, my button eyes focusing on the glowing ground. *What color did he say this was?*

Green? The air is stolen from me as his hand wraps around my throat, forcing my head up. “I said look!” he barks out as I obey. His grip softens as realization hits him. My eyes stare back into his as a wave of sadness washes over me, knowing I’m not what he really wants. Maybe I’m just another game to him. *A toy.* “I’ve made you sad.” I’m not sure if he’s asking, but I give him a small shake of the head, the best I can manage with his warm hand still firmly around my throat.

“I’m fine,” I muster as he slowly lightens his strength and releases my neck. “Not really sad. I-I’m just embarrassed.” His head cocks to one side as he watches me.

“Why embarrassed?” I give him an awkward smile.

“You just rejected me. Kind of hurts a girl’s feelings, doll or not, especially when I’m wrapped around your waist, offering myself to you.” His face falls, and in the glowing light, I can see his tanned skin pale. It’s an expression I’ve never seen from him before.

“N-No!” he wheezes, partially laughing. *Is he embarrassed?* “Blue, I am not rejecting you. I just—sex is something you’ve never experienced, and a virgin is something I’ve never experienced. It’s not —” He releases a breath as he hunts for his words. “Pretty girl, I don’t want to hurt you like that.”

“But you *do* want to have sex with me?” I ask sheepishly. His laugh is abrupt, startling us both.

“I would think the hard cock pressing against your body would be clue enough, but if you need more,” he purrs. “Yes, dollface, there’s nothing I want more than to lay you down and bury my cock so deep inside you that you’ll be feeling me for days.” I release a shaky breath as I think back to our game and the things we did. I want to do those same things again, and more. I want him to take me and show me everything we could do together. Everything we could be together.

Leaning forward, I capture his bottom lip between mine, sucking and biting until he lets out a feral growl, his hands gripping my waist as a metallic tang coats my tongue. This awakens something deep within me as I reach down and fish into his pocket, attempting to touch him, but instead, I find myself pulling out his dice.

“Oh, they glow.” I release his lip, smiling softly while looking at the worn cubes. “Green?” I ask him as he nods, only half paying attention, as he’s focused mainly on my mouth.

“My blood is coating your lips,” he says, his voice low and feral. I gaze up at him, running my tongue along my lips, tasting his blood, enjoying the metallic flavor of him. He almost moans while his large hands re-adjust their bruising hold on my thighs as he glances to his growing cock beneath his pants. “I didn’t think I could get any harder.” His voice isn’t like his at all. It’s lower, slower, almost drugged, and with every word, I feel my center tighten more and

more. Time to stop being such a virgin.

"Wanna play a game?" I ask, his eyes snapping to my button gaze as I wiggle the dice in my hand.

"Oh? What are we rolling for?" he asks, grinning as his eyes sparkle with eagerness.

"Even number means we stop." He groans at my words. "Odd means you have sex with me."

He lets out a low chuckle of surprise, "Ohhh... dangerously high stakes there, dollface."

"Go big or go home, right?" He smirks, taking the dice, about to roll when he stops and looks at them.

Holding them to my mouth, he raises a brow. "For good luck," he winks. I think he wants me to blow, but am taken by surprise when he grips my jaw, opening my mouth forcefully. He drops the dice in my mouth before running his tongue over my bottom lip, cleaning off the remnants of his smeared blood. I let out a soft exhale, my body tingling as he does so.

"Be a good girl and suck on those for me. Can you do that, dollface?" Oh, I can, and I do. I roll them around in my mouth before hollowing my cheeks, sucking the dice clean before slowly popping them out individually and placing them in his hand. My eyes stare up at him as I leave my mouth open, saliva dripping from my lip onto his open palm. The corners of my lips curl as I raise a brow.

"Let me roll odd or I'll fucking cheat, I swear," he growls before rolling the dice. He spins us around, gracefully laying me on the cold floor as a glowing moth ignites and flutters away. Feverishly, he unzips my dark dress, sliding it from my body until I'm left wearing only the thin silk nightdress, my tights, and platform shoes. He kisses me, looking up at his roll. A sinful smirk pulls at his lips as he looks back down, his hand gripping my neck as he leans in close and whispers into my ear.

"Seven. You're *mine*, dollface." My eyes flicker with excitement. "Before I fuck you *senselessly*," he leans back, his hand firmly in place around my neck as I gasp softly for air, "there are three rules." *Rules? Is this normal for sex?* Firefly holds up his free hand, pointing a single finger to the sky as he remains on his knees, straddling my waist. "Number one. Things may be a bit painful at first, but that's normal. If it becomes too much, you tell me to stop, okay?" I nod, slightly excited and nervous by the idea of sex hurting. "Number two." He holds his second finger up. "Don't be scared to do whatever feels right to you. If you feel the urge to do something," he grins, "do it." I nod again. *Odd, but okay*. "I mean it, dollface. I don't judge or mind getting tossed around like a ragdoll." He winks.

"And number three?" I ask sheepishly, my core burning at the

wait.

Firefly slowly leans forward, his lips hovering above my skin as his hot breath makes it tingle and come alive. He takes his time, making his way to my mouth, smiling as I lightly gasp, struggling to focus. “Don’t be quiet.” His voice falls to a low growl as his fingers dig deeper into my neck, my body instantly curving into his as if it’s the most natural thing to do in response to him. His eyes darken as he grins, the glow of his face almost burning my eyes as he kisses me, speaking into my mouth. “I mean it, Blue. If you like something or want me to do more—” He runs his snake-like tongue along the top of my mouth as I widen it, inhaling his breath. “Say it. I want to hear *everything*.” He pulls my throat, forcing my head closer to him as my hands travel along his bare back, feeling his skin. “Every moan and whimper. I better hear them. In here, we do whatever we fucking want with no regrets.”

My body has a mind of its own, my hips thrusting toward him, aching to feel the pressure of him between my legs. Firefly smiles, beaming down at me. “Atta girl. Now,” he releases my neck, air rushing my lungs, drying my throat out as he runs his hand along the curves of my body and grips my thigh, yanking me close. “Let’s take things a little slow.” *Slow?* He delicately unlatches my platform shoes, tossing them aside before he yanks my tights from my legs in one swift motion.

He laughs lightly, reading the sadness and impatience across my face. “Trust me, dollface,” he lifts my leg, placing it over his shoulder, kissing my bare ankle. “I don’t exactly want to take my time, but I promise,” his tongue glides across my skin, lingering over my stitches as it slowly snakes toward my knee, “when I’m finished with you, you’ll never forget your first time.”

His eyes meet mine, watching my face as it twists in a burning pleasure, reacting to the way he handles me. His tongue continues as he moves toward my inner thigh, his head dipping beneath the hem of my thin nightdress. My hands reach out, touching his hair as his mouth moves to my center, his hot breath hitting my aching pussy. *I want to feel him closer, inside me.* Deciding to obey his rules, I relax and allow myself the freedom to explore rule number two. Following my instincts, I let my fingers curl, weaving through his dark hair, nudging him closer.

Firefly exhales, nudging my throbbing clit with his nose, his tongue immediately following as I whimper loudly, jolting in response as if I have been shocked, my pussy dripping with the desire to be fed. He grabs my other leg, placing it over his shoulder as he tugs, my body slamming into his face as his tongue pushes against me, licking my wetness. My hands squeeze his hair as my limbs tighten, a soft cry

escaping my lips. I know he can feel and hear my pleasure, groaning into me as he pushes his tongue inside, his hands gripping my legs, seemingly enjoying himself as I continue to drip with a burning hunger. More. I want more.

"Stop," I wheeze, my heart racing from his hot tongue.

Firefly halts, his body stiffening as he slowly removes his tongue and lifts his head. His mouth is wet, glistening in the glow of his tattoos. "What did you say?" He seems almost shocked—confused by my demand.

I lower my legs, sitting up as one of the dainty straps of my nightgown falls to my elbow. I can't help but stare at the notorious Boogeyman sitting before me, on all fours, beautiful and ready to take me. It's almost empowering, knowing he's down here only for me.

His eyes burn into mine, waiting for me to explain myself. "I—" My eyes fall to the floor as nerves set in. "I don't mean for us to stop—you know. Just that..." I bite my lower lip. *How do I explain how I feel?* I want to experience everything, to feel everything. As much as I like what he's doing, I want to do more. I don't want to be like any other person he's been with. I want my first time to be memorable for us both.

His hand gently touches my chin, moving it to face up at him. "Rule number two."

I nod. "I-I just want to do everything."

Firefly's nervousness melts away, and a sinister grin takes its place. "Not sure we could fit it all in one go, I am but a man, dollface, but I'm willing to give it a go or die trying."

"Not everything-everything!" I shout, slapping his chest as embarrassment fills me. "But... " I glance at his bare chest, allowing my fingers to trace the etched designs, admiring his built frame. I half want to throw him back and lick the color from his flesh. Firefly watches my hands, breathing heavily as he wipes his face. "I wish my skin was like yours." The words fall from my lips as faint whispers.

He watches me, a spark flickering across his irises. "As long as you remember rule number one." He grabs my hand, running it down his chest, reaching beneath his pants until his cock is firmly in my grasp, flexing at our sudden contact. Instinctively, I try to pull away, almost frightened by the size of it—but he tightens his grip, forcing my hand to stay still.

"Don't be scared of it," he teases. "My cock doesn't bite—though I can." He leans forward, brushing my hair aside, exposing my shoulder as he kisses me, opening his mouth as his teeth dig into my stitched flesh. My eyes bulge, and my throat burns from the rush of air as I inhale sharply, liking the gentle pain. My hand accidentally flexes, causing me to squeeze his cock rougher than I mean to, his body

jerking as he bites me harder, moaning into my skin, kissing me.

"Sorry!" I whine, thinking I'm doing something wrong.

"Don't be," he rasps, releasing me from his clenched jaw. "Some of us enjoy pain." Firefly continues to guide my hand, moving it toward the end of his cock, the tip wet and dripping, allowing my hand to move easily along him. Curious, I squeeze him again, a spark inside me flickering as his body tenses, a moan escaping him.

"How do you know... if you like pain?" He opens his mouth, his tongue snaking along my jawline.

"The only way to find out is by feeding your sexual curiosity." His tongue stretches further than before, tracing my bottom lip. "You say you want skin like mine, and now you're curious if you like pain. What if I told you there's a way to do both? To paint your skin in color while playing with pain. Would you be interested in trying that?" My eyes flicker with excitement.

"Yes."

Firefly slowly removes my hand from his cock, biting my lower lip as he tugs at the soft skin, sucking as he drops me from his mouth. "I think you'll like this new game."

He snaps his fingers, the whole room igniting as the bugs come to life, glowing as they did when I first entered. I can't help but gasp, still in awe at the overwhelming presence of color. He stands, his cock swollen and pressing against his pants as he smiles, stepping toward the wall. He reaches out, allowing a butterfly to flutter to his hand. It's a vibrant blue, fluttering its wings as it sits there, allowing him to hold it. "It might not be as permanent as getting a tattoo, but," he strokes the insect's wings, walking to my side, kneeling, "it's enough." He glances at me, placing the butterfly across my heart with gentle care.

The insect weighs almost nothing, sitting perfectly still on my chest, slightly waving its wings. I smile, cautiously reaching my hand up to pet it. My touch startles it, and it flutters into the air. Firefly reaches his hand up, catching it perfectly within his fingers.

"Let me fix that." He pulls the needle out of my bun where I always keep it. "If it becomes too much, you tell me." I'm unsure what he means or what he's about to do, but I nod, eager to experience his next move.

He places the butterfly back on my chest, purposely running his hand against my breast, a buzzing feeling running through me. He leans forward with the needle, piercing it through the butterfly's wings and through my skin. I wince at the sharp pain, watching as he loops the needle through my flesh and back out through the other wing, pinning the bug to me. Small beads of my blood trail from the tiny wounds and run down my skin. It aches and slightly burns, but surprisingly, I like it.

I remain still, enamored by the beautiful butterfly pierced into my body, its color glowing against my skin like Firefly's. It's not a tattoo, but it's still beautiful.

"How do you feel?" he asks softly, causing me to glance up at him, my breathing still heavy as I respond.

"Does it hurt them?" I ask, ignoring his question.

"My bugs feel no pain." *His bugs?* "You didn't answer me. How do you feel?"

My eyes remain locked with his as I roll up, settling to my knees, my head reaching his chest. The needle pulls at my skin as I move, striking me with a pleasing sting. "I feel amazing." *Rule number two.* "Can you do it again?"

His smile returns, and there's a new dark excitement in his eyes. "You surprise me, dollface." He stands back up, walking to the wall and grabbing a handful of colorful bugs. "Would you like to pierce me as well?" The question takes me back. He shakes his head, pulling a small glass jar of needles from behind a stray box. "You don't have to if you don't want to." The sharp metal spikes cling together and rattle in the jar as he walks back to me.

"W-where did you get all those?" I ask, pointing to the needles.

"Let's just say—I like to collect things." He sits next to me, opening his hand as numerous colorful bugs chitter within his grasp. "Which would you like next?"

I gaze at the bugs, and I'm unable to hide my elation at their hues and beauty. I point to one, a centipede. "What color is this?" I ask while picking it up, the worm-like insect wiggling between my fingers.

"This one is orange, much like the stripes on your tights."

"My tights have orange?" He nods as I set the bug back into his hand. "Would you really like me to pierce you?"

He nods again, the darkness in his smile returning. "Like I said, some of us like pain. It helps to heighten certain pleasures." He winks. "Though the idea of you piercing me is something new I'd also like to experience. This is a first for both of us." *Something new for us both.*

He reaches his hand out, offering me the orange bug. Carefully, I pick it from his fingertips as he plucks a needle from the jar and hands it to me. "W-where do I do it?" I ask.

"Anywhere you want. Dealer's choice."

"Anywhere?" I teasingly ask, raising a brow.

Firefly leans in close and runs his tongue over his teeth before lowly replying, "Anywhere."

As he stares into my eyes, I raise the needle and centipede to his chest, piercing it into his skin in the same place he previously pierced me. He doesn't flinch or move as I weave the needle through him, taking the pain as if it's simply a mere breath of air. My hands remain

on his chest, feeling his hardened muscles. My impulses take over, guiding me as I lean forward and run my tongue along his tattooed chest, tasting his color. He moves my hair and places a beetle against shoulder. “Purple,” he whispers raggedly while sticking the needle into my skin and through the bug as it wiggles. The pain coursing through me is amazing, sparking a fire between my legs. I move closer to him, reaching for a moth and needle. It’s green, the color I seem to favor the most.

I place the green moth against the nape of his neck, watching his face as I dig the sharp needle through them both. He’s fighting back his pleasure, biting his lower lip. “Rule number three,” I whisper, licking the freshly pierced spot. “Don’t be quiet.”

Firefly chuckles darkly before dropping the bugs and pushing me against the floor onto my back. He kicks the jar of needles, spraying them across the ground. The beetle across my shoulder smooshes under my weight, its colorful guts painting me as the needle rubs my skin, my blood mixing with the purple, streaking down my body and drenching me in color. It’s beautiful. They are color inside and out. I want to see more. Impulsively, I grab one of the scurrying bugs and slap it across Firefly’s face, the color splattering along his skin.

He tightens his jaw, licking the guts from his mouth. “Did... you just slap me with a bug?” He asks, wiping a little from his cheek. My cheek burns with regret.

I fucked up.

“Ah, yellow. Just like your hair.” He chuckles, causing my head to tilt in confusion as he rubs the yellow bug remnants down my sternum.

“I thought you said my hair was blue?”

“It is, but only half. The rest is yellow.” He searches around, snatching a blue beetle from the floor. “This side,” he smashes the beetle along my cheek, covering it softly in the warm blue guts, “is blue. And this side,” he wipes more of the yellow from his face and rubs it on my opposite cheek, “is yellow.”

I grab his hands in mine. They’re covered in the bright, glowing insides of the bugs, and I rub them together, watching as the two colors combine, creating something else. “Green.” He nods as I swipe my fingers across his palms. It’s baffling to see how color works.

Firefly runs his hands across my chest, moving beneath my nightdress, tucking it under my now exposed breasts. He stops, staring at my body, something rumbling in his chest. “Your tits are fucking amazing,” he states before running his hands across them, brushing my hardened nipples. I moan at the feeling of him twisting my body as he massages me, painting my breasts in the color, my body now glowing just like his.

My arms lunge forward, grabbing his neck as I pull his mouth to my own, crashing into him, unable to not be consumed by him for another second. The bugs across our bodies squish beneath us, splattering a rainbow of fluorescence across us both, the needles tugging at our skin as we bleed lightly along the insect guts. “Can you pierce me again?” I breathe raggedly, grinding into him. “But without the bugs.”

Firefly breaks from my mouth, raising a brow. “Oh? Did someone discover something new they like?” He’s trying to remain calm and unbothered, but even my inexperienced self can see the shift in him. His usual relaxed, dominating body is wound tight and vibrating. His breaths come out in heavy pants, and his green eyes are gone, replaced with his blown pupils. I bite my lip, nodding slightly while watching his dark gaze follow my lips with the precision of a predator stalking its prey.

“Well then,” he breathes. “How about I pierce something that’ll really make you feel good?” He glides his hand across the floor, picking up two needles and my tights.

“What’re those for?”

He places the needles between his teeth, moving my arms above my head, wrapping the tights around my wrists. “Something tells me you’re going to enjoy this more than you think.”

“You seem to think that an awful lot,” I tease, causing him to laugh.

“Doesn’t seem like I’ve been wrong yet.” This is true; I’ve loved every second of this, and yet, I need more. I feel like he keeps showing me a peek, and I’m ready for him to pull back the curtains.

Firefly yanks the material of my tights, tying them roughly above my head. He then spread my legs, wrapping them around his waist while intently staring at my breasts. He pulls the needles from his mouth, using his breath to warm them. “Do you trust me?” he asks, and I’m momentarily frozen. Do I? He raises his brow while looking from my breast to my eyes. “The answer you’re looking for is ‘Fuck no,” he states, but I’m shaking my head before he can finish his statement.

“Fuck, yes,” I pant out, pushing my breasts toward him. “Yes, Firefly. I trust you.”

“Foolish doll.” He leans forward and grips my left breast in his large hand. I moan at the roughness as he kneads the flesh before his thumb runs over my nipple. He grips it between his thumb and forefinger and pulls the sensitive flesh, causing me to cry out. A smirk tugs on his lips as he plays with the needle in his mouth before lining the first one up.

“Firefly?” I whimper nervously while looking at the needle next to

my green-covered nipple. “What are you going to do?” His chuckle is low as he releases my nipple, his hand traveling to my clit and stroking the tight bud. His lips capture my nipple, giving it a suck before his teeth bite the bud and pull it. I want to cry in pain, but the rapidly building pressure growing between my thighs makes it impossible to focus. I feel my coil snap as an orgasm hits me, and I throw my head back in pleasure but scream as I feel the needle run through my nipple. The room springs to life, the grayscale world bursting with color as I can see everything clear as day.

Color.

The pain mixes with the pleasure of my orgasm, and I don’t know which is more powerful at this moment. All I know is, I want more of it. I feel addicted. I’m unsure if it’s the painful piercing, my orgasm, or color… but I *need* more.

“One down,” he chuckles while massaging my right breast, which I note feels more sensitive now that my left is pierced. “One to go.” I look at my pierced breast, oddly aroused by the sight of a sewing needle sticking through my nipple. My eyes move to his face, noticing his hair is indeed black. The ends are lightly stained by the colorful guts smeared across our bodies, matching the rest of him. The color of the world begins to fade, leaving only his glowing tattoos and the brightness of the surrounding bugs. *No*. “This might hurt a little bit more, but I promise, I’ll make it worth it.”

He repeats the action, biting the tip of my nipple, pulling it as he runs the needle through, taking his time. I cry out loudly as my back arches, my lingering orgasm beginning to grow into something monstrous, my wetness dripping down my folds. He’s right—the second time is so much more painful than the first. It almost brings me to tears.

Firefly runs his tongue across my freshly pierced nipple, pulling the pain from my body as he lingers a moment before moving to my other, holding my tied arms down. “Please,” I beg, my body on fire. “I need more.”

Without a word, Firefly yanks my body up toward his, looping my bound arms around his neck as I sit perfectly in his lap. He quickly unfastens his pants, pulling his cock free from them. It’s glowing green, the color reflecting in my button eyes as I stare back in awe at the color and size. My mouth begins to water as I sit still; I’m sure looking like a freaking idiot.

“Everything okay?” he asks.

I snap my head up at him, my pussy soaked and aching for him. “It’s green.” He stares at me, silent, his jaw tensing. “I like green.” As I speak the words, I move my body, touching his, the tip of his cock pressing against my lips. He and I release the same weak moan, and I

know there's no stopping this now, not even if I wanted to. I have to feel him. I have to be consumed by him and his light, his color.

Firefly squeezes my waist, stopping me from rubbing against him again. "Are you sure, dollface? Once we do this, there's no going back." Doesn't he see? We've already done too much. There is no going back already. I need him more than I need my next breath.

I stare into his eyes, watching the green flakes as I push against him, our wetness seeping onto the other as I slid along his cock. He doesn't move as I raise to my knees and angle myself before slowly lowering until his tip presses against my entrance.

"It's going to hurt, Blue," He's nearly shaking as his grip on my hips tightens. I nod, understanding as I shove the head of his dick inside. My mouth gapes open as I stare at him, his face a mixture of shock and pleasure as he watches me struggle to slide down him. The immediate pressure and burning pain is beyond anything I could ever have expected or imagined.

His face twists as he releases a near whimper. "Fuck." His fingers dig into my stitched skin as he pushes deeper inside me, almost growling as he does.

My arms bulge, fighting the restraint around my wrists as I pull his head toward my chest, seating myself fully on him. After a second of allowing myself to adjust to the foreign intrusion, I move my pussy along his shaft.

"Blue," he rasps as his scalding hands trail up my back, clawing me as he kisses my neck, his lips moving to my chest, playing with the needle across my heart. As I grow a little more confident and the pain becomes pleasure, I find my rhythm and increase my speed, my throat burning from my moans as I suddenly feel the urge to throw him back and own him.

Rule number two.

As he licks the needle across my chest, I pull my arms from his neck and shove him back. He grins, allowing me to take control as we adjust ourselves and I resume riding him. My hands press against his firm stomach, supporting my body as I move faster, enjoying every second. His hands slide up my thighs and squeeze my waist before trailing to my breasts. He tugs on my sensitive nipples, the mixture of pain and pleasure almost sending me over. "Firefly," I mewl, feeling my body swell with a building orgasm.

He shoots forward, gripping my throat roughly, forcing me to look at him. "Oh, no, you don't." His tongue slithers along mine. "I let you have one already. The next one is *mine*." He falls from my body, a soft whimper leaving my lips as he rolls me to my hands and knees, lifting my backside high.

"Wha—" I cry out as he roughly pushes deep inside me, gripping

my hips as he begins to pound into me. My body rocks back and forth, my knees and elbows scraping along the floor as he fucks me from behind, holding nothing back, his nails digging into me, leaving small, crescent-shaped reminders of what we've done, the lines we've crossed. I fight against my orgasm, trying to hold it back as long as I can, but between his relentless fucking and my pierced nipples scratching the floor, I'm completely powerless over my body.

My head rises as an unrecognizable and feral cry leaves my body. I feel myself coming all over him, but this time is different, as I feel the liquid shoot from my body and hear how much wetter everything is as my pussy clenches around his dick. The room once again blooms with color, waves of euphoria washing over me as I continue to pulse around him.

"Fuck!" he yells, slamming harder into me. "That's my girl, gushing all over me, you filthy little doll. Fucking yes!" His praises amp me up even though my body feels limp.

Firefly must sense that I'm unable to hold myself up any longer, as he spins me around and captures my legs, wrapping them around his waist as he stands, as if my added weight is nothing. He slams my back against a fluorescent-colored, bug-covered wall, their blood and guts coating us as he drives himself deeper.

"You're fucking breathtaking," he grunts as he lifts my legs over his arms to rest in the crooks of his elbows. I lull my head to the side, crying at each thrust as I feel the pressure building again. "Oh no, you don't. Hey, eyes on, me dollface," he orders, slamming into me rougher to emphasize his demand. I look at him weakly.

"I can't again," I whine, but even as I say it and my colorful world is dimming, I know I want him to make me see the color again.

"Really?" He pants, a bead of sweat running down his temple, smearing the fluorescent guts painted across his skin. "Come on, pretty girl, I know you got one more in there just for me. Let's see if we can set it free." He smirks as his thrusts become faster and more erratic. I scream with every rough invasion as my fluids rush from me again.

"Oh noooo... " I whimper as the tightness and fire builds back up.

"That's it," he praises, pressing into me. "You look right the fuck at me. Don't you dare look away." My gaze locks with his as I open my mouth, releasing a primal shriek as my body gives in to another orgasm.

Firefly's jaw goes slack as he watches me. His head begins to roll back, and I grip his hair roughly. "Don't you dare look away," I rasp out, and he loses it. He roars my name as he delivers one final thrust, as his warm come fills me to the point that it seeps from my pussy, mixing with mine. We sit there, frozen in the moment, as we collect

our breathing and allow our hearts to calm. I feel woozy, drunk on the high of how my body feels—I'm so sore and sensitive and love every second of it as I watch the color around me. He slows, still gliding back and forth, panting as he squeezes my backside before laying us on the ground. "Fuck," he breathes, resting his sweaty forehead against mine. "Your pussy—it's fucking phenomenal." He runs a finger along my clit as I arch my back, moaning at the overwhelming sensation.

Firefly kisses my lips before reluctantly pulling away, his cock dropping from my body, causing me to whimper at the loss. As I lay on the ground, my arms and legs shake, and I feel like a newly hatched butterfly. The needles and piercings in my flesh ache as I shift to gaze at him, his chest glistening with sweat as he stares at me, smiling. A new glow catches my attention, my eyes trailing to his cock as I notice bright green and blue liquid coating him. His gaze follows mine as he brushes his sweat-slicked hair back. "Interesting, isn't it? Your come is blue, and mine is green."

The color of the room fades back to its usual dullness, leaving only him, glowing and on display. My Firefly. If this is how sex feels, I want it every day, every hour, with him. *Always*.

Chapter 8

Firefly

"F-Firefly!" I smirk at her name for me as she arches against my mouth, my tongue twisting and flipping around her throbbing clit. *That's right, dollface. Scream my name*. I grip her thighs as her legs tremble beneath my hands, another orgasm rolling through her tight body that I greedily lap up. Fuck, she tastes so good. It has to be a sin to consume something this delicious. I look up as her dreamy smile tugs at her full lips, and I know she's seeing color.

It's interesting; Blue can see color if I'm exposed, or during an orgasm, making the last couple of days quite entertaining. My cock has never been so sore, and that's saying something. We've had to make do with what we could. I can't have her over at my treehouse all the time. Those assholes who linger around might start something, and I still don't know if or what the Spinster can see through Blue's eyes, so I come to her. It's easier and much more private. Plus, we can be as loud as we want without having to worry about an unwanted audience. We've taken to boarding up the windows in the upstairs office of her home, ensuring that I can be fully naked without others seeing me, but glowing perfectly just for her. Right now though, I never thought I'd say this but, I need to let my dick rest.

Blue is addicted. To sex or the color, I don't know, but she won't stop, and though my stamina is high, even I need a cool-down period. For me being her only sexual adventure, she sure seems to have an appetite, much like my own. So, here we are– her spread out on the old, dusty desk, legs over my shoulders, while I sit in this chair and enjoy my fucking feast.

"How many orgasms do you think you can have before it kills you?" I muse while nipping the inside of her thigh. I might be enjoying myself a little too much.

"I-I don't know," she dreamily pants, "but I'm willing to find out. Y-you know, for science." I can't help the laugh that escapes me. Blue's funny as fuck, filled with this fiery spark that flickers with attitude. It's kind of sad, though, because I rarely see it. Blue is very shy and unsure of herself. She has little confidence and seems damaged—unlike any other creation. Her fire shows up every now and then, but it's always short-lived, snuffed out by her lingering

trauma. I want to see more of it, I want to experience more of her, but that kind of pain is rooted far into her being, and not so easily forgotten. Honestly, it reminded me of myself.

I shake my head, pushing the dark thoughts away and begin sliding her legs off my shoulders. I grip her hips and move her off the desk and onto my lap. I can't help but smirk while watching her breasts bounce at the movement, her nipples still tender and healing from our little piercing session.

"You're so pretty." Her words startled me. I jerk back to look up at her as her fingers graze my cheek.

"Huh?" is my intelligent response, causing her to giggle. The sound is... well, it's beautiful. It's a soothing, sweet melody I'm not used to hearing. The first time she made that noise, I was so startled, I felt like I needed to get as far away from her as possible. Fuck, maybe I still do. I'm supposed to be making her fall in love with me, and here I am, enjoying the sound of her laughter.

"I *said*, you're really pretty." I let out a huff, unsure of how to respond. Not many women have called me pretty. Honestly, I think Havoc is the only other one besides Blue. *Pretty bug.* That's what she calls me. Fucking annoying, really. "Don't play shy," she scolds, tapping the tip of my nose. "You know you are."

"Am what? Pretty? No, I don't think anyone has ever looked at the Boogeyman and thought, 'Wow, there's a pretty monster'." I rolled my eyes, tsking.

"I'm not looking at the Boogeyman." She leans in, her lips brushing over mine softly. "I'm looking at my Firefly, and he is no monster. Misunderstood, sure, but not a monster." God, she knows exactly what to say.

"You have no idea how wrong you are—fuck—" I whimper as her small, delicate hand wraps around my aching cock. I gotta give it to him, he's dead yet still getting hard. I'm not sure I have ever enjoyed sex as much as I have recently. Blue raises up, angling my cock at her wet entrance before sitting back down. I roll my head back at the tight, warm feeling.

"You are a problem," I chuckle weakly through my moan as she grinds against me.

"Not all problems are bad," she pants while gripping my hair and tugging it roughly. The way she embraced our rules, taking control and doing as she pleased... How am I not supposed to melt at the aggressive dominance? I liked it, probably a little too much.

"Fuck!" I stand up and lay her on the desk again so I can thrust into her deeper, selfishly wanting more. "Goddamn it, I want to stay buried in this pussy forever."

"I'm okay with that. Oh! Harder, harder!" she screams, and I feel

her clamp down on my cock so tight, I nearly can't move. I thrust faster, my movements become erratic as I feel myself release inside her, groaning into the air, unleashing everything. *Fuck*.

I lean over as she reaches up and kisses me, her sweet tenderness surprising me, before leaning back onto the desk her elbows. "I like you," she breathes with a smile. My blood runs cold, and fucking Christ, I want to run. This is what I want, what I need, and now that she's confessing... I would rather her despise me at this point. Suddenly, it all feels wrong.

Blue knocks on my head, pulling me out of my dark thoughts, and I see her holding my dice in her hand. "Wanna play a game?" she asks, and I raise a brow, impressed by her stealth of retrieving them without me knowing.

"Considering our games usually end in this situation, I feel like it's a wasted roll." I grin, blowing a few stray strands of my dark hair from my face.

"I was thinking more like a roll for truths," she suggests, sitting up and grabbing her dress. I slip my pants on, wincing at my now wet and sore cock as I adjust myself and sit back in the chair. "Odd, you, even, me?" She rattles the green cubes in her hand, biting her lower lip.

"Alright, I'll give you one." The smile on her face twists at my heart as she sits back on my lap and rolls the dice across the desk, filled with excitement. *Fuck.* I grimace at the four and three facing up. "You know, I've won more rolls since you've been around me than in my entire life." This seems to make her happy, because she looks up to me, her smile so big that her dimples pop. It's fucking adorable... Damn it.

"Maybe I'm just your lucky charm." She boops my nose and laughs while leaning against the desk. I take a deep breath to ready myself for whatever her question is.

"Maybe. Now, ask your question."

"Okay, eager beaver," she teases as she considers me. I wait for it, contemplating what she might ask: *how many people have you killed? What's your real story with the Spinster? Do you like me too?* The possibilities feel endless, but nonetheless, I mentally prepare myself. One of these I'll be able to answer. Then again, I went into this game on my own. I don't cheat when it comes to a game.

"What's with the dice?" I don't expect that question to fall from her lips.

"Well," I reach over and pluck the dice from her hand, "it's kind of hard to gamble without them."

"Ha ha," she bites. *Oh, sarcasm. I like it.* "I mean, why *these* dice? What's so special about them that you always have them on you?"

“Nothing, actually.” I shrug as my fingers play with the blue strands of her hair. “These are just temporary replacements until I have *my* set back.” It comes out with a little more anger and hostility than I intended, but I’m reminded of the fact that the cunt still has my dice. My only fucking possession. I feel my jaw tense as memories I’d rather keep tucked away try to claw their way to the surface.

“Where’s your set?” My eyes snap to hers, and something niggles at the back of my mind. *Don’t do it.* It whispers, but I ignore it.

“With *your* creator,” I spit out, causing her to flinch at my words.

“You say it as though I have any more choice in it then you did.” She whispers and I shrug. “I didn’t ask to be made.”

“No, but you stuck around, did her bidding—” I watch her head droop and stop myself from digging any deeper. “Anyway, she took my set. Stole them. And now, she has them locked away somewhere in her precious Dreadmoor. I still remember how they look, the deep red the same color as fresh blood. I had carved skulls across the surfaces, marking them. I still remember the way they felt in my hand, the perfect weight for a perfect roll. It makes me sick to know that she still has them, just sitting there, possessing them as a way of toying with me, knowing their worth.”

“Which one is red?” she asks. I smile softly, pointing to the color inked just under my chin. “Red,” she whispers, memorizing the hue. Her fingers trace the tattoo as I watch her brows furrow, creating a sweet little line on her forehead. “I could get them for you.” My knees nearly give way at the shock of her words. *Blue would venture into Dreadmoor?*

“What? How?” Blue shrugs as she slides from my lap and walks around the desk, running the tip of her finger across the surface.

“Havoc goes through the portal, right? Traveling from Nightmare to Dreadmoor. And I came through when I landed here. So why couldn’t I go back, same as Havoc does? I’m sure it’s possible. I could do it, Firefly,” she chimes, excited to do such a thing. Blue places both her hands against the top of the desk, her dual-colored button eyes reflecting my body’s glow. “I could go to Dreadmoor, get your dice, and bring them back. To you.” I have to force myself to blink, unsure if what is happening is real or a simple figment of my imagination.

I follow her around the desk, grabbing her by the side of the neck and tilting her face up toward mine. “And why would you do something that reckless?” I manage over the dry lump forming in my throat. What I really want to know is *why would she do something that reckless... for me?* But I fear her answer. I fear the answer because it might be the exact one I’m needing, the answer I’ve been scheming toward.

She shrugs again. “I have feelings for you. You’re supposed to do

nice things for those you care for, right?" I'm suddenly itchy all over, and it's hard to breathe. *Feelings.* "Firefly?" I blink, looking at her expectant gaze. *Right. She expects me to say it back.*

"Wanna try something?" I ask while tapping the dice on the desk. Her eyes flicker and a small smile forms over her lips.

"You sure you have the energy?" she taunts, and I bark out a laugh of surprise.

"One way to find out," I muse. "Alright, odds, I fuck you in the mouth, even, you pick." Her hand goes to those peachy lips, and I have to fight the growl in my throat. Sore cock or not, I've been fantasizing about her choking on my cock for far too long. And if I can also get her to change the subject– win, win.

"Okay," she whispers, and I smirk while tossing the dice, my eyes never leaving hers. "Seven," she whispers before I capture her mouth with my own. She whimpers against my lips, and my sore dick comes back to life. "What do I do?" Her question is so sweet and innocent.

"Pretty doll." I kiss her lips softly once more before standing and unfastening my pants. "On your knees, dollface," I order softly, reveling in her eagerness to submit. She falls to her knees and looks from my cock to my face, waiting for further instruction. "Open," I strain out, nearly falling to my own knees as she opens her perfect mouth, her sweet tongue sticking out slightly.

"Perfect," I whisper, lining my cock up with her mouth. "Fucking perfection." Blue's tongue runs along the underside of my cock, and I nearly lose it right then. "Pinch my thigh if it becomes too much." I grunt, shoving my length down her throat. She gags and, fucking damnit, the power she has in this moment. If she knew she could rule me, own me with just a snap of her fingers... The realization terrifies me, not enough to stop though.

"Suck, dollface, yessss..." I hiss as her cheeks hollow and I guide her head back and forth. "Let's see if you can take it all," I rasp, burying myself further down her throat. "Oh fuck, that's my good girl... Perfect... R-right there." Throwing my head back, I release a growl as I feel myself about to hit my umpteenth orgasm. "Fuck!" I grip her hair as I ram myself down her throat. She gags and grips my wrists as I release myself in her throat. "Swallow," I growl as I grip her throat. Once I feel her throat working, I release myself from her mouth and lean back. If I come again within the next day, it might literally stop my heart.

"What's wrong?" I ask, helping her to her feet. She gives me a frustrated stare.

"No color?" She pouts, causing me to chuckle lightly.

"Dollface, you didn't come, I did. Would you like me to give you another?"

She shakes her head. “Save it for when I get back with your dice.” She beams.

“You’re really going to do this?” She nods excitedly. “Just because you think you like me?”

“I know I like you, and yes, again, it’s what you do for those you like and care about.”

“I wouldn’t know,” I mutter, standing as I grab my suit and put it on over my clothes so we can go out of the house. We exit the office and begin to walk down the hallway. “I don’t like anyone.” I flinch from behind my mask at the pained look on her face as she hears my words.

“Y-you do *that* with everyone you don’t like?” she asks while jutting her thumb over her shoulder toward the office door. I chuckle lightly.

“Alright, I might *not* dislike you entirely.” What am I saying?

She reaches up and lifts my mask over my lips before pressing her mouth to mine. The kiss is soft, with a passion I don’t deserve, but I let her, enjoying it a little too much.

“You may be Nightmare’s Boogeyman, but you’re *my* Firefly, so stop acting like some cold, heartless villain.” She smiles, licking my lips.

“Dollface, I *am* a cold, heartless villain,” I murmur, reaching for her lips again. *God she’s delicious*. Her hand presses against my chest, tugging at the burlap material.

“Hmmm…” She cocks her head to one side. “That’s so strange.” Her hand rests atop my heart. “You *say* you’re heartless, and yet I feel something hammering away in this muscular chest of yours.” She smacks my chest, grinning as she continues to walk down the hall, her ass shaking perfectly as she sways.

Oh, fuck… I like her.

HAVOC

“Are you sure about this?” Boss asks the pretty dolly.

Games, games, games. Games shouldn’t have feelings, and yet, boss plays the strings of dolly’s heart. Ting, ting, ting, he plays her like a string. Naughty boss bug, tricking his blue doll into a trap.

“I’m not sure this is such a good idea,” Charisma chimes in their voice. Such a pretty thing. Havoc always likes Charisma’s bright eyes and hair. Like fresh cotton candy. Havoc thinks it would taste sweet. Just one bite, maybe? *No. Bad Havoc, focus on the game. Boss man said, no bites on friends.*

“Charisma is right. Who knows what’s waiting on the other side.

Or how your t—" Big bad Sullen stops as boss man growls him a warning. Demon almost said the bad word, we don't call dolly the bad word. Sullen's nervous face looks delicious, making Havoc giggle. Sullen clears his throat as he continues to speak, "*Blue*, might not survive. Not that I care much for dolls or creations myself." Liar. Black eyed Sullen loves to paint his pale face with doll's blood. He likes playing with them, but he breaks his toys. And never shares. Rude little devil.

"Havoc," Boss man's voice grabs Havoc's attention. Havoc's eyes shoot to his mask. Such a dull itchy face. Makes Havoc want to scratch, scratch, *scccratchh*. "Do you think it'll work? Do you think Blue can get through?" The human eye of Havoc's rolls and swirls, round and round, as she rolls an 'M' from her tongue.

"Why not? Dolly came through, Havoc came through. Havoc goes out—" Havoc cocks her head as it droops like mud on her arm. "Dolly goes out. We walk through light and open the door." Havoc remains still, her brain sleeping as she stares into the darkness. Dead thoughts.

"So, you think it'll work? You think Blue can get through?" Havoc nods, hearing rattles in her brain. Such pretty music. "Havoc?" The music stops as boss man grows bigger, walking toward her. "You need to keep an eye on Blue. I need you to protect her, keep her safe. Do you hear me?"

"Spiders eat bugs. Bugs burn in the light," Havoc mumbles. Blue's buttons sparkle in the moonlight, shiny and new. *Eyes*. "Havoc always keeps her eye on dolly!" Havoc jumps, saluting the mean old bug. "Havoc does as Havoc is told. Let's go play, dolly!"

"Wait!" Boss is too late. Havoc has dolly, and Havoc is going through the light.

"Bugs to the light!" Words make Havoc giggle. "To Dreadmoor, we go! Needle and thread mean we're dead," The blinding light burns as dolly screams. "Fly bug! Together, you burn!" Our bodies hit the ground with a smash.

Dolly groans, pain in her face and bones. "Havoc?" she cries, with sleepy eyes. "Where—"

"Havoc wins!" Havoc dances, waving her arms. "Dolly returns to Dreadmoor!"

Firefly

I anxiously continue my pacing as I wait for Havoc and Blue's return from Dreadmoor. They have been gone for hours, leaving me to sit in an endless waiting game I don't much prefer. *This guilt; why do I feel it?* This was a test, to see if Blue could not only make it to Dreadmoor

and back, but if she liked me enough to risk her life for me. This was the plan all along, the one I rolled for, and yet, here I stand, ill from worry of what could be keeping her away. *Did she get caught by the spinster? Did she get back there and decide she wanted nothing to do with this place... with me?* The sheer thought makes my heart sink.

"Boss man," Charisma breathes out in shock, pointing to the portal as Sullen wraps his arm around their waist. I turn my head to where they're looking and see Havoc stepping through the beaming light, appearing from the otherside. I watch through my mask, noticing she's all but carrying Blue. I run up to them and my heart plummets as I stare at her in shock. She's cut and beaten, visibly destroyed as her head hangs low. I quickly remove my glove, my glowing hand lifting her chin and when she looks up at me—

"Oh my God," I say over the lump in my throat. Her soft, sweet lips are violently stitched shut in a perfect x pattern, the thick thread pulling at her skin as her blood drips from the incisions. "Blue," I coo, running my fingers gently over her swollen, bruised, discolored cheek. She winces softly, tears streaming down her dirtied face as I snap my hand back.

"Toys are marching two by twos," Havoc pants out as she looks behind her. "Boss man, take Havoc's dolly, fix, make her sing songs again. Havoc will play with the toys. Make them sing new songs." I nod as I decipher Havoc's threatening words before turning to Charisma and Sullen.

"I need you to stay and help Havoc. Keep whatever comes through that portal back."

Charisma flicks their lavender boa across their shoulders as Sullen crosses his arms. "Say less," they wink. "Havoc, if anything ruins my shoes," Charisma rotates their foot, the moonlight reflecting off the purple leather boots. "I'm coming for you."

"Havoc will make sure there's no mess for pretty Charisma," she cackles. "Sullen can have the messy ones."

Sullen smiles, his lips curling as his teeth sharpen with glee. "Happily," he laughs methodically. "Let me play with toys. I *love* a good blood bath."

"Calm down there, little devil." Charisma flashes Sullen a cheeky smile. "Save that enthusiasm for me." They wink at Sullen, their skeletal face paint glowing much like Sullen's smeared face, reflecting his demon appearance.

Looking at Charisma and Sullen, I ensure they will stay with Havoc as they all nod. I carefully lift Blue from Havoc's arms into my own, cautious of her many wounds. She releases a muffled cry due to her stitches, and my blood begins to boil. *How dare that cunt do this to her?*

"It's going to be okay, dollface," I say softly, despite my true

feelings, as I quickly maneuver us away from the portal and through the woods. *That fucking bitch. We might be playing a game, but that doesn't mean she had to do this to Blue. If she wants a fight, then I'll give her—* I feel Blue's cool hand slip under my mask and rest on my overheated neck, as if sensing my fuming rage. The tender coolness of her touch grounds me, reeling in my anger, and temporarily tamps down my blinding rage. "I got you, Blue," I whisper, holding her tight as we continue to venture deeper into the woods, the outline of the treehouse just within our sights.

Together, we slowly slip away into the darkness of my treehouse. I make my way to the basement, knowing it's her favorite spot, and that the presence of my colorful bugs will cheer her up. We carefully descend the creaky staircase until the room comes to life, the bugs all chittering her welcome. I watch her face beam as the colors come alive in her button eyes. *God, she's beautiful.*

Blue's eyes move from the bugs, up at me. She goes to speak, attempting to move her tightly sewn lips before letting out a painful cry. My heart aches at her pain, watching a tear fall down her cheek as blood drips down her chin. "Don't," I rasp while trying to calm her, to stop her from trying to speak as I carefully sit her down on the ground, removing my mask and suit. I grab the small knife on the table and sit next to her, inhaling deeply. "Come here. Let me see what I can do."

Her fingers touch her lips, and she shakes her head no.

"Blue..." My voice cracks in pain as I reach out to her. I'm trying with everything in me not to show my anger, to not allow her to see the rage brewing below the surface, but I fear I'm not hiding it well. "Blue," I say a little more sternly. "Please, come here." She's hesitant, but she comes over to me, slowly straddling my lap before looking up at me. Another tear rolls down her delicate cheek as she tries to open her mouth slightly, tearing her flesh.

"Don't," I snap, my voice breaking. "Dollface, you'll tear your mouth. Fuck, Blue, you're still bleeding." I raise my hand to try and carefully stop the bleeding. It's no use. I need to undo what has been done. "I'm going to cut this, and then I'll get the threads out. I'm going to fix this, Blue. I promise." I take my small blade and slide the sharp edge beneath the thick thread, against her full lips. We both sit for a second, our anxiety rising, her lips bleeding as I try not to harm her. My hand trembles as I exhale and carefully cut the first string with a snip as her tears continue to fall.

"I'm sorry," I whisper, cutting the second thread. "I'm so fucking sorry." She has no idea. I'm sorry for the pain I'm causing her, for getting her to go to Dreadmoor, for making her like me in the first place. She doesn't deserve this. She doesn't deserve to be used as a

pawn in this game, as a means to a win. And for what? I knew she'd never get my dice. Those were a lost cause, but I *needed* to know if she could get through to Dreadmoor. And she can. Not only did she get through and survive, but she was able to get back, and it seems the Spinster had sent her back to me, her mouth sewn shut as a clear message. She was always one step ahead.

"What the fuck?" As I cut another thread, blood begins to pour from Blue's mouth, dripping down her chin and pouring over the front of my shirt. I stare at her in horror as she continues to cry, tugging her lips. Something is inside her mouth, it's hurting her. I feel my anxiety rise as I quickly cut the rest of the threads, the pressure from the strings popping fueling my panic further with each completed snip. Her mouth opens with a garbled gasp, and something falls out onto my lap, coated with her mixed blood and saliva. She cries out, panting at the pain and sudden rush of air as I pick the objects up, my heart stopping immediately.

My dice.

I look up to her, blood and saliva still running from her opened mouth. "Y-you got them," I whisper. They feel so heavy in my hand, the red of her blood matching their color perfectly.

"I-is." She inhales sharply, coughing on her blood. "Is that t-them?" she asks. I can't help but to stare at the dice, completely robbed of words. "I wasn't sure, i-if it was them. All color looks the same in Dreadmoor. But..." She wipes her mouth, wincing as her sleeve smears the blood across her skin. "But I remembered what you said about the skulls." My fingertip traced the hand-carved skulls.

"But how—"

"I hid them," she whispers so softly I can barely hear her. "In my cheeks, then when... when she stitched—" She lets out a sob as her fingers tremble over her lips, her arm shaking violently. "When she stitched my mouth, I moved them to press on the roof so she wouldn't feel them in my cheeks. The corners are still so sharp. They cut me." I feel the sharp edges cutting the edge of my thumb as I rub them. I don't think there's ever been a time in my entire existence that I've hated someone as much as I do myself right now. Not even the bitch Spinster is at this level. And the worst part is, I *knew* this could happen. I knew she could end up going there and getting hurt or killed. And I allowed it. I allowed a sweet, beautiful girl who has a laugh that makes me feel things in my chest go alone to fight my battle. And she went. She went willingly, risking her life just to get me these dice, even though she ended up beaten and tortured. Because she likes me.

"They are yours, right?" she croaks out, her hand still hiding her mouth.

“Yes,” I whisper hoarsely, setting the dice down. “Does it hurt to speak?” I ask, trying to move her hand. She stops me and shakes her head.

“No. I-I mean, it hurts b-but it’s fine. I should go, though.” *Go? Where is she going?*

“What? Where? Why? No. Let me finish helping you.” Blue stands, her legs shaking with exhaustion as she starts for the stairs, but I grab her wrist to stop her.

“Ah!” she cries out, and I jerk my hand away, seeing the cause of her pain– her wrist is viciously bruised, the skin dark and almost purple, unlike her usual faint blue tone.

“Dollface—”

“Good night, Firefly.” Blue quickly steps onto the stairs.

“Please.” I desperately force the foreign word out as she freezes. Turning around she still has her mouth covered as she stares at me, her brows pushed together in confusion. I drop to my knees, my eyes burning into hers as she stares down at me. “Please, Blue. Don’t leave here, don’t—don’t leave me. I can’t—fuck...” I grit out. This is so fucking hard. “I can’t—Blue, I’m so sorry. I’m so sorry I put you in danger. I’ll never allow it to happen again. But please, if you leave me here alone, I’m going to put on that suit and that fucking mask, and I’m going to hurt *everyone* for what happened to you.” My throat burns as I growl the words, fighting back a wave of emotions. I need her to stay, to be with me.

“No one here hurt me, though,” she whispers.

“It doesn’t matter. I can’t get to *her*, so I will cause everyone pain here. Blue, doll, you're the only thing stopping me from becoming the Boogeyman right now, and I genuinely believe it’s because I don’t want you to be afraid of me. Please, I–I don’t want to be him right now.” I feel so vulnerable, so exposed, kneeling at her feet, pleading with her, a creation, to save me.

Blue considers me for a moment before slowly stepping back down the staircase and walking to me, carefully dropping to her knees. A pink dragonfly lands on her nose before flying off as it makes her giggle, warming my soul. *God, that laugh.*

“Pink, right?” she asks, watching it flutter away. I nod softly.

“You’re learning.” I’m so fucking proud of her.

“I wasn’t leaving because of you, Firefly.” She picks at her nails. “I was leaving, b-because I’m embarrassed.” *What?* “I mean, look at me.” She points to her face, her expression soaked in pain and sadness. “I’m sure I look an absolute mess! I don’t want *you* to see me this way. To see me so ugly.”

“Blue... ” I grab her hand gently as I bring it to my face. “How do you not see yourself as you are?” Chuckling lightly, I continue. “It

amazes me to think you have no idea just how stunning you are." She lowers her eyes, a heaviness weighing on her mind.

"I see myself as I am. I'm not beautiful or pretty or strong. I'm just a to—"

"Don't," I snap at her. "You are *not* a toy. You know that better than anyone. Don't you *dare* soil your name by calling yourself a toy."

Her laughter has a melancholic edge to it as she shakes her head. "I'm nothing but scraps, Firefly," she cries, the words morphing into light sobs. "Do you think the Creator purposely chose this for me? I am made of broken parts and pieces. I don't think or act like the others because I am nothing like them. I am a mistake, sewn together with bitterness and disdain. I am nothing."

"Don't say that. Blue—" I try to interrupt, but she cuts me off with a shake of her head as she stands up, making her way back towards the steps.

"Where are you going?" I demand, quickly following after her. She doesn't respond. *No, I won't let you leave.* I reach out and grab her wrist, but she lets out a pained cry as I quickly release her again. "Sorry," I whisper, taking her hand gently to examine her injured wrist. My scowl deepens as I see the dark bruises and cuts marring her skin on both arms. "Blue, were you—were you chained?" I grit out, my anger reaching its tipping point.

"Yes," she whispers weakly, snatching her wrist away and cradling it against her chest. "S-she had me chained while she stitched my mouth—hey, where are you going?"

I stop in my tracks, having raced halfway up the stairs, and look down at her slumped figure. "I'm going to find a way into Dreadmoor," I say firmly. "I'm going to grab that bitch and shove my fist so far down her throat, I'll rip out her intestines and strangle her with them as she watches me kill her with those fucking button eyes of hers."

"Why? If you don't die crossing the portal—which you know you will—why would you risk giving her the upper hand? Why would you risk getting hurt or killed?"

"Because she hurt you!" I bark out, punching the wall with all my might. The bugs immediately fall into darkness, their color snapping to blackness, startling Blue more than my temper. The aching pain is a brief distraction from the seething rage coursing through me. "Goddamnit, Blue! Why can't you fucking understand? You. Are. Important. You're not just some toy! Not to me." She silently begins making her way up the stairs, her eyes locked on me. As she passes by me, she stops on the step ahead of me and places a hand on my chest before leaning in to kiss my cheek softly, her bloody lips brushing my cheek.

"That's sweet of you to say," she murmurs. "But Firefly, I was

nearly killed over a pair of dice. I am disposable, both to her and—" She stops, swallowing her sentence. "To you." *No.* "Now please, just let me go home and rest. And I beg you, don't follow me. Don't come to my window tonight or wait outside my door, Please, just—just leave me be." I want to argue, to fight for her safety, but I see the exhaustion in her eyes and think better of it.

Reluctantly, I step aside and let her pass, ascending the stairs and leaving me alone in my basement.

Blue.

Chapter 9

Blue

From the beginning, he was there,
In the shadows, full of despair.
Rarely seen, yet always a flame,
Eagerly waiting for what was his to claim.
Forever haunted by his past,
Letting all know he was an outcast.
Yet, here he was, glowing for me, my Firefly.

The delicate, luminous dragonfly lands softly on the tip of my nose, its tiny wings tickling my skin with each flutter as it showers me in its glow. A joyous giggle escapes my lips as I watch it dance around me, leaving behind a trail of shimmering light like fluorescent glitter in the air. I believe Firefly named this hue, if I remember correctly, purple. I make a mental note to confirm the color with him when I see him again— whenever that will be. The immediate heavy sadness weighs down my joy as I listen to the sounds of Nightmare. The cold night air is alive with the buzzing of insects, their midnight singing dancing in the air, carrying with it the sweet scent of blooming flowers which flows in through the open window of my room, as I sit by my small fire, listening to the small cracks and pops. I can't help but feel sunken and sad at the peaceful night life—the smells and sounds remind me of my Firefly.

A heavy sigh escapes me, my trembling fingers running over my swollen, sore lips. The holes in my skin throb with a dull pain, reminding me of the blood that had dried and cracked around them after my encounter in Dreadmoor. The conflicting emotions of longing and fear swirl inside me, making it nearly impossible to even consider going to see him again. Every fiber of my being yearns to run back to Firefly, to melt into his embrace, but after everything that happened in Dreadmoor, I can't bring myself to do it.

My attempts at remaining unnoticed in the Creator's world were

futile, as she quickly discovered my presence and gleefully threw me back into my old room. But it was during my time in captivity that my eyes were opened to many things about Firefly and myself. Despite enduring endless torture at the hands of the Creator, I realized I do have genuine feelings for Firefly, and I know, despite his gruff exterior, he cares for me too. The only problem is, I fear my feelings may outweigh his, and that realization cuts deep into my heart.

"You're not just a doll!" His words echo in my mind, bringing a sense of warmth to my heart. Bringing my knees to my chest, I curl up into a tight ball, pressing my bruised cheek against my knees as I watch the dragonfly swirl above me. I can't help but envy its freedom and ability to fly anywhere it wishes.

"Such a pesky pretty thing," Havoc sings from the shadows. Havoc's voice doesn't faze me, as I've grown oddly accustomed to her lurking in the darkness, always near and appearing at random times with a burst of chaotic energy.

"I like him," I say weakly, raising my hand as the bug lands on it. Havoc dawdles over, her body slinking as she moves, and sprawls out beside me, kicking her legs in the air.

"Which pretty bug is the dolly referring to?" I laugh, snorting lightly at her question, knowing what she means.

"Both," I admit softly. Havoc rolls onto her stomach, sitting on her bottom before crossing her legs and looking at me, leaning in real close, her head slightly tilting. Her single black button eye sends a chill over me as I shift slightly in discomfort, feeling it boring into my soul. I noticed the rough stitching that held it to her eye socket, remembering the way the stitching felt across my lips.

"Dolly is remembering Dreadmoor, huh? Snip, snip." She motions her fingers like scissors, smiling as her teeth sharpen. "Stitch, stitch. Loose lips sink ships, pretty doll." I flinch at the eerie words before forcing myself to look away.

"I-I think..." I stop, struggling to form the words. "I think s-she broke me," I whisper weakly as a lump forms in my throat.

"Dolly is a toy. She breaks playthings and boss man fixes them, needle and thread. Sad toy is not broken, only in the darkness, needing her nightlight." I whirl my head to stare at her, her sinister smile stretching from ear to ear as anger and indignation fills me to my very core. She doesn't blink or move, only stares at me as I stand, my hands balling into fists at my sides, my wrists stinging from my bulging muscles.

"I'm—not—a—*fucking toy*!" I shout, gritting my teeth as Havoc stands, seemingly amused by my outburst. "Stop messing with my head, stop playing me, and stop with your fucking cryptic riddles, Havoc! I'm done with all of it!" I recklessly shove her aside, my head

aching with anger. In an instant, Havoc's hand is on my throat as she slams my back into the wall, the force bruising my spine as a framed bug falls from its resting place and shatters on the floor. The impact and aggression causes me to cry out weakly. *What is she doing?* I try to grab her wrist, digging my nails into her flesh, desperately trying to get her to release her hold, but Havoc is shockingly much stronger than me. She pries my fingers off her, seemingly unbothered by the claw marks I leave behind, her expression frozen in time as she simply watches me struggle.

"Why does dolly hurt Havoc? Havoc cares for dolly. Likes dolly." Her smile drops, leaving a blank emotion that strikes fear into my bones. Her head bounces as her human eye rolls, settling on mine as a shadow befalls her. "It's not nice to shove people, Blue." The manner in which Havoc talks normally is enough to make one uneasy, but this, right here, the way she says my name? It doesn't even sound like her. It's so eerily foreign, I can't help the shaky inhale of breath I take. "Naughty, naughty," she tuts while squeezing my throat.

"H-Havoc," I rasp, trying to stop her. I try to find a way out, but I'm trapped. I'm always trapped, lost, hurt. Havoc, Stingy Jack, Dreadmoor, the Creator—all of them. I'm always tossed around, always pushed aside. Do this, do that, be a good doll. I finally find my voice, my own strength to disobey, and here I am, cast into a literal endless night in hell. And now, after everything, I'm going to die at the hands of my only friend.

"Dolly *wants* to die, yes? She likes the bugs, yes? Would like to rot in the ground with them? Be one with the worms in the dirt, eating the flesh off bones and death. Munch, munch, munch. Dirt in your mouth." I try to shake my head side-to-side as my vision starts fading at the edges, darkness sinking its long, pointed fingers across my eyes as I fight passing out.

"I don't—" I wheeze out, fresh blood pushing from the scabs around my lips as the Creator's words flood my brain.

"Using that whore mouth to give the Boogeyman pleasure? To whisper him secrets? Well, I'll take care of your loose lips, you wretched pile of trash. I should've sent you to be one of the toys the second I broke that fucking button in your eye. You are nothing but a pile of scraps, a pain in my side. I'll take care of you, Blue. Let's see how much he enjoys you after I stitch a smile for him."

The Creator's words hit me, igniting a small internal spark. Without thinking, I drive my platform shoe into Havoc's knee, causing her to cry out and fall, releasing her gripping hold on me. Cold air rushes down my throat, causing me to gasp and cough uncontrollably. I stumble back, watching as she wriggles around in pain before turning away and running down the stairs, rushing out the front door.

I sprint down the gravel path leading away from the Taxidermy home, only to hear Havoc shriek, jumping from the tree outside my window. She lands on the ground and rushes to me, huffing as she runs. *Shit!* I try to run, but it's no use. My legs are screaming in pain and exhaustion, unable to move.

"H-Havoc," I plead quietly as I shake in my shoes. Havoc falls to her hands and knees, crawling toward me like a spider about to capture its prey. "Please, Havoc. Don't do this." She grins, crawling faster. "Leave me alone, Havoc!" I shout, my voice still hoarse as I try to turn away, attempting to flee. I like Havoc, and I genuinely didn't want to fight her, but I fear I might've triggered something deep inside her, something dark and deadly, and no matter what I say or do, she's going to kill me.

"Dolly," she pouts while dragging to her feet, as if she's a child being forced to do something she doesn't want. "Havoc doesn't like bad touches," she whines. I can't look away, both disturbed and curious about her mannerisms and words.

"And dolly doesn't like getting called a toy," I spit while trying to step back, little by little putting some distance between us. Unfortunately, I'm starting to feel the only way out of this situation is *through* Havoc, and I don't think I'm able to take her on, even if I was fully healed and rested. Something about her is too powerful.

Havoc twitches and snaps her head to one side, as if someone is talking in her ear. She curls her lip, rearing back. "No!" She scoffs. "Havoc is angry, yes, but to kill the dolly would be bad for the game. Bug wouldn't win," she hisses sharply. *Bug? Game?* I blink, Havoc suddenly closer, inches away, stepping towards me. "Dolly," she growls, lowering herself as if to pounce. I gasp, turning to run, when her arm grips my ankles, knocking me to the ground as my head bounces off the dry earth. "No!" She yanks my legs, my tights ripping against the ground as my knees slice open, my fingers clawing at the dirt, desperately trying to stop her.

"Havoc, please!" I cry out, tears burning my bruised cheeks. "Stop this madness!"

"Madness? No, not madness, dolly. Sanity!" Havoc whips me around, straddling my body with her knees. "Never ending sanity, bursting with color and bugs and toys!" She cheers with glee as she cackles, trying to grab my neck.

"Get off!" I grunt while smacking her hands away.

"Shhhhhhh." She tries to calm me. "Havoc won't kill dolly," she coos while touching my face. "No, just play a fun game. A game with blood and bones! Dolly likes games, yes?" A bright, colorful light dances out of the corner of my eye, catching my attention. It's the same dragonfly from earlier, except it's changing color from purple to

green and flying away in a hurry. *How odd.* The dragonfly reminds me of Firefly, fueling the hidden spark within. I need to escape, to get away from Havoc.

"Havoc," I grit out while bucking my hips and rolling so I'm on top, straddling her. "Stop it, or I'm going to murder you!" I scream out, trying to pin her arms down.

"Murder Havoc?" Her smile becomes maniacal as her cackle rings through the chill air. "That's a good dolly. Yes, go ahead, murder Havoc. Show them all. Smells sweet and innocent, but Havoc knows the truth," she hisses.

"What truth?" I ask as Havoc's button eye flickers, pushing her arms into the dirt.

"Dolly has the darkness threaded within her stitches. Scraps and trash. Made from nothing into something. Spider things. Dolly is dead inside, but dolly feels. She plays the game, same as bug, but never wins. Too scared to try." *What the hell is she saying?* She stops resisting and relaxes herself on the ground with a smile. "Scared dolly. Blue may be your name, but you are no longer sad. Just scared." Her head tilts back, as if listening to someone speak.

"No, Havoc can't do that," she whispers, glancing at me as she continues to communicate with the air. "Think of the big, pretty picture. The web stretched thin." Havoc nods, as if listening and agreeing with someone. I always wondered if she heard voices in her head, but this confirms it. Havoc grins, showing her sharpened teeth as she looks at me, lifting her head lightly. "Don't be scared, dolly. Havoc is here. Friend or foe, no one knows." She cackles. "Poor, scared, weak dolly. You think you know pain? You know only the prickling tip of a needle."

"I'm not scared," I grit out, releasing her arms as I stand up, tired of fighting. "You fucking psycho. You have *no* idea the hell I've endured, living in Dreadmoor, haunted by the Creator! The torture I experienced for a set of dice! And for what?" I huff out a laugh. "No one cares. It was all for nothing."

"Not nothing, dolly." She tsks. "The game."

Havoc remains laying on the ground, watching me. "The game. Yes." I scoff. "Right, because that's all anyone cares about around here—the fucking game! Winning this endless game at any cost! Doesn't matter who gets hurt or dies; you all just want to win!" I begin to pant, exhausted and tired.

"Pawns are meant to fall." Havoc shrugs. "They are happy to fall for their queen. Simple fact."

"The Creator isn't my queen," I snap as she nods, rising to her feet. Her face turns dark as she steps toward me, speaking low.

"Havoc agrees, she is no queen." She steps closer, my heart racing

in preparation of her next blow. “Dolly is part of all the games, twisted in the web of truth and lies, drowning in the madness of color and sinful cravings. Queen, pawn, toy—dolly does not know who she is. Lost and wandering the shadows while bugs guide her path, leading her to pain. Roll the dice, play your fate, but Havoc knows the truth.” Her crazed eye pierces through me.

“What are you talking about, Havoc? Just tell me! Tell me the truth!” Havoc opens her mouth to speak, but a loud roar interrupts her.

“Havoc!” I stiffen at the feral bark from him, my Firefly. I turn and slap a hand over my tender mouth. He doesn’t have his suit on. Firefly is standing under the full light of the moon, glowing, transforming the yard into almost daylight with his colorful tattoos.

“Firefly,” I breathe out in shock. “Y-your suit.”

“Did you touch her?” he growls, ignoring my voice as he storms over to Havoc, who is now simply standing with an amused grin on her face.

“Boss man is running around naked!” She points and gasps, her inhale turning into snickering laughter. Havoc looks behind the large, glowing man at me, her usual personality snapping back. “Havoc’s besties are here! Look!” She waves her arms around, dancing with excitement. “Boss man wants to play the Nightmare game!” *Nightmare game? What is that?* I watch as the other minions walk over; Sullen and Charisma, if I remember correctly.

Sullen, a gangly, grumpy devil with solid black eyes and an evil grin, is holding the hand of Charisma. Charisma has the prettiest short, curled hair and sparkling eyes, glitter glistening from their tight curls and cheekbones. They are stunning, dressing in a tight leather bodysuit with a painted on skeleton form and knee-high leather boots, wearing the fluffiest thing made of feathers around their neck. Havoc says Charisma is neither male or female, but both, something I admire. The two minions remain hand-in-hand, confidently watching and waiting to see what madness will unfold. I find it beautiful, having the confidence to be themselves, knowing who they are. I envy them. I envy all of them... except maybe Firefly. He’s so much like me —unsure of himself, always hiding and scared to be free, unlike his trio of minions.

“Did you touch her?” he repeats louder, his voice gravelly from the force of his shout as he delicately examines my face and body.

“I-I’m fine,” I state, trying to reassure him. I touch his hand, and instantly, his eyes narrow in my neck, noticing the fresh bruising from Havoc’s fingers.

“N-no,” I stutter. “Those are from Dreadmoor—” I try to lie, but it’s too late. He snarls as I watch him pull out his knife, seething with

rage, aiming for Havoc.

"Firefly, stop!" I cry out, rushing between him and Havoc, slamming my hands against his hard, bare chest. "Don't hurt her!"

"Don't hurt her?" He tries to push against me, to force his way through to Havoc as she stands there, cackling to herself. "No one touches you, Blue. No one but *me!*"

"I started it!" I confess and watch as Havoc whips her gaze to me, confused. "I shoved Havoc. She—she called me a toy, and I got upset, so I shoved her. I hurt her first. Please, put the knife away." He doesn't want to stop, I can see it in his face. He has a desire to create pain, to make everyone suffer for his own hurt. Something is damaged in him, and seeing me suffer is only the tipping point to his building rage. Firefly eyes me for a moment before he reluctantly puts his knife away, pulling me into his arms while glaring at Havoc. She studies us, her human eye narrowing as something flickers across her button eye.

"Never seen you hug someone before, boss," Charisma chimes, crossing their arms as they play with the feather around their neck. "Especially not a doll."

"Should be more careful, boss," Sullen hisses. "Button eyes aren't to be trusted."

"Bug likes it," Havoc whispers.

"You three," Firefly snaps, nodding to the trio of minions. "Go back to the treehouse. Get the fuck out of here. Now," he orders. Charisma and Sullen exchange an odd expressive look before walking off, holding hands. Havoc silently lowers herself to her hands and knees, crawling towards the woods like a demon. She stops at the tree line, glancing back as she flashes me a sinister smile.

"Tick-tock," she sings, tapping her button eye before quickly disappearing into the darkness.

I shake my head and turn to look up at Firefly. His eyes are filled with worry and concern as he stares down at me, stroking my cheek with his hand. I open my sore mouth to speak when a loud howl just off in the nearby distance silences me. I recognize the sound from my time here, knowing it's bad despite never having seen what created it. I only know that whatever it is, it's dangerous and deadly, something even Firefly is fearful of.

"Fuck," he growls, looking back at me. "It's the Nightmares. Without my suit to hide my color, they'll see me. I'm a beaming target. Go, get inside and hide until I come find you."

"What? No, just come with me!" I pull his arm, tugging him toward the house, but he doesn't budge. Another howl echoes through the night, this one closer than before.

"Damnit, Blue, stop! Don't you see? I'm trying to protect you! These Nightmares, they don't just hunt until they're full. No, they hunt

to kill and keep killing, never stopping. My colors attract them, and without my suit, they see me. They will stop at nothing, Blue. They know I'm here, and they're on their way to kill me, and then, they will also kill you. Now please, go inside and hide. I'll take care of them."

"I'm not going inside without you." I tug at his arm, trying to force him to come inside with me. "Let's go," I groan as my shoes slide over the ground, his body remaining unfazed.

"Get your ass inside. *Now*," he growls at me, as if his temper is going to force me away.

"No. You're going to have to carry me inside because I'm not leaving you!" I state firmly, crossing my arms over my chest even though I'm trembling in fear.

"Blue!" he shouts at me, similarly to how he shouted at Havoc earlier. "Get inside!"

"No!" I shout back, matching his forcefulness, stomping my foot as I throw my hands down, balled into fists at my sides. I'm not leaving him out here, alone to fight whatever new threat is stalking near us.

Firefly groans, jerking his head back, frustrated and annoyed by my stubbornness. He goes to speak, but the sound of tree branches snapping and rustling in a nearby bush causes him to swiftly lift me over his shoulder and run. He doesn't go to the house; instead, he starts running toward the tree line behind us, away from the home and the sound of Nightmares.

I don't fight him as he sprints, slicing through the woods, jumping over rocks and tree roots with ease, as if such a physical task is easy and I weigh nothing. It's actually impressive, watching him move with such dexterity and proficiency. Plus, I don't exactly mind the view of watching his ass sway and bounce.

Firefly continues through the woods, the sounds of the Nightmares alerting us that they're still nearby, closing in like dark menacing shadows. We hit a clearing, open and exposed beneath the vibrant moonlight as he stops and sets me down. "W-what are we doing?" I ask, nervous as monstrous howls and snarls echo through the trees like a cool night breeze.

Firefly grabs my hand, pulling me through the short grass, rocks scattered all around, as if they've started to form into tiny mountains of stone. He drags me toward them, dropping my hand as he feels around, searching for something. His hands stop, gripping the rough edge of a large rock, moving it slightly. I watch, enamored by his bulging back muscles as he strains, using all his strength to do so. He jumps around, searching the rocky ground below before sliding his body between the rock and the side of the rough hill. "Firefly?" I whisper, wondering where he's going.

"Come here," he calls me, reaching his glowing hand up for me to

grab. I try to follow his steps and climb up the large rock, though far less gracefully than him. I approach his side and watch as he slides down an opening in the earth, like a crack you see in the ground. “Dollface...” He motions, reaching out for me to follow. I nod, sitting on my bottom and sucking in my abdomen to slide down into the crack after him. All goes well until my breasts get caught, causing my body to stick halfway out of the ground. My hands grip the sharp edges of the crack, trying to force myself down, but it’s no use. I feel Firefly trying to maneuver me, to pull me through carefully. The howls grow louder, signaling that we need to hurry, panic flooding my veins as I try to pull myself down. Together, we finally free my breasts as I swiftly fall and, thankfully, land on my feet. I exhale, glancing around to find us in a large, damp, dark hole inside the world. It’s a cave—a secret cave carved within the stomach of Nightmare. Firefly takes my hand, his fingers looping through mine, showing me a soft smile. I return the favor as he begins to lead me toward the back of the dark cave, Firefly’s tattoos lighting the way, consuming the darkness. I notice several tattered hanging fabrics as we pass by, hanging from the top of the cave until we reach the very back.

“What are these?” I asked quietly, touching the ripped edges of the last one as we duck behind it.

“The fabric hides me better, muffling the colors from view,” he answers my question as he sits on the ground, patting next to him. “Sorry, it’s not going to be a comfortable stay. I don't usually have guests with me.”

“So this is yours?” I gesture to the dwelling as I sit on the hard, cold ground beside him. He shrugs, glancing around as the sound of water drips somewhere off in the distance.

“I mean, I found it. Finders keepers, I guess. When I realized no one else was living here or making use of it, I decided to make it a hideout, you know, just in case I was spotted way out here without my suit. I actually have several throughout Nightmare, forgotten places such as this that I can use to wait out the Nightmares. Thankfully, they’ve never found me before.”

Pulling my knees to my chest, I wrap my arms around my legs.

“Have you ever killed one before? The Nightmares?” I ask, my eyes glancing above, listening for any sign of them.

“Many.” He grins, proud of his actions. “I killed one just the other day when I rescued your silly little rat. It was in the form of a large wolf.”

My eyes shoot to Firefly, realizing for the first time just how dangerous he really is. He has killed creations, Nightmares, dolls, and he wants to kill the Creator. He fights Stingy Jack regularly and is always playing games. He turns to peek around the hanging fabric, his

neck glowing with such vibrant colors.

"How can something so beautiful be so deadly?" I ask, not realizing I spoke the words aloud. A dark, quiet chuckle escapes him as he rolls his head lazily against the wall until he's staring at me.

"Pretty girl, you'll find that most beautiful things in this world are dangerous. The more alluring they are, the deadlier they can be. Beauty is danger. The two cannot exist without the other." I scoot to his side, eyeing his skin.

"How tragic," I whisper softly, reaching out my hand as my fingers begin tracing one of his glowing marks, the rough colored scar reaching up his forearm.

"Mmmm... " His eyes close on his soft moan, and I can't help but smile softly, enjoying the sound of him as I continue to trace the numerous marks.

"How deadly am I?" I whisper eagerly, causing him to laugh softly, his eyes landing on mine.

"I've never met a soul more beautiful or deadly than you, Blue." My breath hitches at his confession. "You will, without a doubt, be my end."

"How? W-why?" I stop as his hand grips mine.

"Dollface, I went into a town that wants me dead to retrieve your stuffed rat. I was willing to murder Havoc for you, to rain down pain on all in Nightmare and kill the Spinster for what she did to you. I even left my treehouse to find you, without my suit, knowing I would attract a Nightmare and possibly die. All for you. You, Blue, will be my undoing."

"Why?" I ask again, moving with him as he positions me to straddle his lap. I continue to trace the markings over his face, feeling the designs along his skin.

"Because I'm not the Boogeyman when I'm with you," he admits softly. "I'm not thinking of the game or wanting to cause pain to everyone I see. I'm not thinking of who to kill or who to fuck over. I —" He stops.

"Who are you then?" I whisper, my fingertips touching the green markings stretching at the corners of his mouth.

"With you? Dollface, when I'm with you," he leans in close, "I'm Firefly." I have to force back the sob as my mouth consumes his in a desperate kiss. He groans, gripping the back of my head, deepening the kiss. I feel his forked tongue capture mine as I rock my hips against him, wanting to feel him closer.

"I need to be in you," he pants, the words almost desperate. I nod and lean back as he pulls his glowing cock out of his pants. I push up on my knees before slowly lowering myself onto him, gasping at the sudden pressure. His eyes roll back as his body shudders in pleasure,

arousing me more, knowing I have such an effect on him.

"Firefly," I whimper as his hands grip my hips to control and maneuver me the way he needs. I like it when he handles me in such a way, taking the lead.

"Blue," he pants while lifting my dress to see our connected bodies. "Please," he begs in a painful tone. "I need you. I need to feel more of you, to be deeper inside you. Fuck, I just need you. Please don't make me wait," he moans, his hands running along my thighs to my waist as I lean in, pressing my breasts against his chest.

"Tell me what you want," I whisper while biting his bottom lip. I taste blood, and he groans, leaning into me, his nails digging into my skin.

"Turn around," he rasps. "Now, get on your hands and knees." I do as instructed, crawling on my hands and knees, embracing the pain and pressure of the rough cave floor against the countless scrapes and bruises across my body. He lifts the skirt of my dress, pulling my tights down to my knees, gliding his fingers along my now-exposed skin, tracing up toward my wet center. I cry out, gasping as his fingers roughly slam into me, causing my body to flex and tighten around them. Before I can do anything, he lowers his mouth to my pussy, his long,snaking tongue pushing inside me. I cry out and fall to my elbows as his grip tightens around my waist, roughly pulling me closer to him while he tongue-fucks me. The sound of heavy footsteps vibrate the roof of the cave, small pieces crumbling onto the floor as I fight against the burning, growing pressure between my legs, his tongue swirling inside, ingesting every ounce of me. The pressure builds, consuming me as my thighs shake, and I scream out, squirting my pleasure into his mouth. He captures it before spitting it over my ass, my pussy throbbing and clenching, begging for more, the various blues and greens of the cave shining through the dull darkness.

"Firef—"

"Hush, dollface," he states, and I gasp at the intrusion of his thumb in my ass.

"Firefly!" I cry out at the new experience. He removes his thumb and roughly pulls my body towards him, my back flush with his burning chest, his hand covering my mouth. His free hand pulls my dress down as he begins to play with my nipples, tugging them lightly with a soft growl.

"Blue, there are creatures roaming the land above us right now. Do you hear them?" I nod, moaning against his hot palm. "If they hear you, they will find us, and they will kill us, without hesitation. Now, be a good girl and stop screaming." He knows I can't; I'm always loud when I come. Firefly smirks, yanking the hanging fabric from the cave ceiling and shoving it into my mouth, causing him to release a feral

sound. “Now, get back on your hands and knees.” He releases my breasts, shoving me forward as I land on my hands, the dusty material clogging any sound from my mouth. “Show me that pretty ass of yours.” He slaps my backside, causing me to raise it higher, my muffled gasps silenced. He reinserts his thumb, confusing me. *What is he*—I scream into the dirty material as his mouth replaces his thumb, his muffled groans shooting through my core. He growls, and I feel it run up my spine, vibrating my bones as I begin to drip at the new pleasing sensations.

“Fucking Christ, you’re a sinner’s wet dream.” He continues to tongue me as his hand finds my drenched pussy. My screams are muffled as he alternates between slapping and rapidly rubbing my clit. I buck against him, and he groans in approval before pulling back and spitting on my ass. “Tell me to stop,” he pants as I feel his wet cock pressing against my backside. I shake my head. I don’t want him to stop. I want all of him, and I want him to have all of me. “I’m sorry, but this is going to hurt.”

I watch from over my shoulder as Firefly angles his cock before slipping it into my ass, clenching his teeth as he bites back all sounds of his enjoyment. The feeling of him forcing himself inside is foreign, and I both want more and to pull away. He answers for me by gripping my hips and pulling me flush against him.

“Fucccck,” he groans while staying buried inside me. “You’re so tight. God, you feel so good,” he whimpers, and I cry out as he slaps my pussy again, reigniting the pleasure. He slowly withdraws before slamming into me with such brutal force that I scoot across the ground, my knees scraping against the rocky surface of the cave. He slams into me again and again, all while playing with my clit, increasing the speed of both his hand and cock. I scream against the now saliva-drenched material as I feel a tight burning sensation, my wetness soaking his fingers.

“Ohhhh, that’s my girl,” he praises while gripping and slapping my ass with his free hand. “I can feel you contracting around me. Are you going to give me that orgasm.” He leans over me slightly, running his tongue across my spine. “Or am I going to have to take it for myself?” He bites into my shoulder, barely piercing the skin as I nod rapidly, pressing against him practically vibrating. “You better not come until I tell you to,” he hisses, his hand moving from my hip to my throat. He yanks me closer to him, and at this angle, it’s all too much. I can’t fight it any longer, panting as sweat begins to roll down my forehead. “Hey!” He slaps my pussy before moving his hand away, causing me to scream out in frustration.

“I own every one of your orgasms,” he grits into my ear, his hot breath burning my cheek. “I tell you when you’re allowed to see color,

to find your release. You only come when I say, understand? You get greedy, and we are going to have to stop playing." I whimper at the thought and nod while resting my head against his chest, sweat now rolling down my front. He's quick to bend me back over, rutting into me as he starts at my clit again. The tightening is back, and the burn is more intense than before. I feel so close, aching to unleash my painful orgasm. Firefly grunts, followed by a high-pitched whine that nestles in my ears.

"Now," he pants, his thrusts becoming erratic. "Come, Blue. Come for me. Come now— fucking now! Fuck!" he roars as I feel him release inside me, undoing all my restraint. I scream into the material as I come undone, and the world becomes color. I see my blue and yellow hair and the red color of the cloth I'm using as a gag.

He gives me a few final thrusts before resting against my backside, panting uncontrollably. He inhales before pulling out, his cum running down my thighs, mixing with my own. I remove the material from my mouth, saliva soaking it as I spit on the ground. I turn back, looking at him sitting there, his broad chest heaving, fully in color. *He's so beautiful.* He leads me to where the trickling sound of water is coming from, and we both use the damp material and small stream to clean ourselves, wiping the excitement and sweat from our bodies.

Firefly lays on the ground, motioning to me. "Come here," he says, showing me a warm smile. I return the expression and carefully crawl to him, laying against his bare chest. Yes, I'm obsessed with sex, addicted to the color, but this—being close to him—I love this most. If we could, I would choose to stay here, hidden away from the dark world in this cave, just me and my Firefly.

"Firefly? What was that?" I ask, tracing the outline of a spider along his ribs.

"What?" He tilts his head to better look at me.

I bite my lower lip, my cheeks lightly flushed from all the exhaustion and body heat. "W-what you just did to me."

He laughs softly, his hand resting across my bare breast. "You said you wanted to try it all, and it just felt right in the moment. Did you not like it?"

"N-no, I did!" I whisper loudly, afraid of upsetting him. "I just... I never knew that was possible." I feel stupid making such a comment.

"Anything is possible when two people like each other." My eyes flash at his hushed words.

He likes me.

Firefly and I lay together for what feels like hours, silently listening as the Nightmares stomp around in the world above, the sounds of their footsteps eventually fading away. My mind won't stop going over his words, trying to remember the colors of the cave,

trying to stay awake. I want to talk to him, to know more about him. We might be intimate, but I feel like I still don't fully know him.

"Why do you hate her?" I ask while resting my head on his chest.

"Hate who?" he asks, his voice almost sounding sleepy as he plays with my loose hair.

"The creator." His body immediately stiffens, as I knew it would at the mention of her presumed name.

"Is it really that hard to figure out? I mean, look what she did to you." He sits up, forcing me to move off him. "She hurt you, Blue." His fingers trace the wounds across my mouth.

"I know, but that would be the reason for *me* to hate her, not you. You've obviously hated her long before me, Firefly." He stares at me, his face full of annoyance. He really doesn't want to share this.

"It doesn't matter," he mutters, dismissing the subject as he stands to get dressed. "I'm going to head out, check to make sure things are clear. I'll come back for you once I have my suit and know it's safe." I feel as though I upset him. I don't want him to leave.

"Firefly." I grab his wrist to hold him to me. "Please, don't leave. You say it doesn't matter, but it does. It matters to me," I say softly. "How is it fair for you to always expect me to tell you everything, to be so open with you, if l you're not willing to do the same?" He shifts uncomfortably while licking his lips, running his hands through his hair in frustration. "Please," I beg softly on my knees, staring up at him.

"I told you," he rasps, his voice low and thick. "I don't play fair."

"No, you said the *Boogeyman* doesn't play fair," I say as my hand runs up his powerful thighs and over the bulge forming in the front of his pants.

"Blue," he whispers, his hand gripping the back of my head, his fingers tightening around the strands of my hair, tugging them tightly. "What are you doing?"

I wiggle my knees closer to him while running my fingers delicately over the bulge of his erection. "I want to make you see color too," I murmur, nuzzling my face against his crotch, making him shiver.

"Fucking Christ!" he growls as I run my tongue over the purple line peeking from his waistband. "I-ha... I already see color," he pants as I nip at the front of his hip. I hum in agreement.

"I know," I whisper while unfastening his pants and pulling his cock free. "But I bet I could make you experience colors like you never have before." The tip of my tongue teases the head of his dick, and he draws in a breath.

"Is that so?" His confident persona is gone, leaving behind a shaking, needy mess for my enjoyment. I don't know why I feel the

pleasure I do. The first time I sucked his dick, it was foreign and fast. But now that I have the control, now that I can see exactly what pleasure he's getting from this, it's a power trip I never want to surrender.

"Mmhmm..." I moan as I drag my tongue along the length of his green cock, following the lines from tip to base.

He lets out a pained, almost frustrated laugh. "Motherfucking God, Blue. If you're going to suck it, fucking suck it." I can't help but giggle as I pull back.

"No," I state, and I have to stop from laughing at his face as he looks like I took away his sunshine.

"Huh? Wh—"

"I'm going to do what I want, and if *you* would like me to *suck it,* you're going to ask me... No, I changed my mind. Beg me." His lip twitches as he looks around, as if perplexed by my demand.

"Are you serious? I-I don't beg for sex." I shrug before spitting on his cock and running my hand over the shaft, softly, as if a feather is touching him.

"Have it your way."

"You're being a fucking brat," he hisses as his hands grip the rock he's leaning against.

"Noooo," I sing before teasing the underside of his tip with my tongue. "You told me to tell you what I want. I'm following *your* rules. You're not playing nice."

"Fine," he grits through his teeth. "Blue, will you *please* suck my dick?" That's the worst beg I've ever heard, but I lean in, sliding his cock down my throat. "Oh, fuck," he whimpers. "That's it, fuck yes... keep going, dollface. Let me fuck that perfect throat."

I revel in his sweet, dirty words and narrowly forget myself and submit to him. But I can't, not this time. I've got to stay in charge. Maybe if I can get him to feel the euphoric release I do, he'll feel calm enough to talk to me. I know for me, besides pain, his teasing is what sends me over the hardest.

I pull his cock out of my mouth, running my tongue over his length again before blowing cool air over the salvia trail I leave behind.

"Oh my God!" he cries in frustration, another laugh breaking from his chest as he stares up at the cave ceiling. "Blue, I'm going to freak the fuck out."

"Shhh..." I scold as I grab his hips to pull him to me, kissing and nipping at his length. "You want the Nightmares to hear you getting off?" I tease as my hand cups his balls. His torso tightens as he shoulders roll inward.

"Blue," he whispers, and I see it: he's so close to breaking. I spit on his cock again while spreading my thighs to give me access to my

dripping pussy. “Blue... Blue... Please...” I nearly come at his feral desperation. My arousal soaks my hand, and I bring it to his cock, my blue juices smearing all over his glowing, green cock. “Fuuuckkk... ” His eyes roll as a bead of sweat rolls from his chest to his navel.

“You want to come for me?” I ask innocently while sucking his tip. His nod is rapid as he tries to grab the back of my head, but I jerk back. “Uh, uh.” I tsk. “Beg.”

“Blue,” he growls, his voice shaking. “Please, dollface, put me out of my misery. Give me the high that only you can deliver. Please, I’m not worthy or deserving, but *please,* I beg you, allow me to come in that infuriatingly perfect mouth. Allow me to replace my higher power’s name with yours. Please, Blue. Fuck!” he grunts as I ram his cock down my throat, gagging on the intrusion. I grip his ass in one hand as I massage his balls in my other.

“Yes, fuck, yes,” he nearly cries on a whisper as he thrusts into my mouth. “So perfect. Look at you. I fit so perfectly. That’s it... Suck—Rright there, fuck...” He grips me by the scalp as he delivers thrust after erratic thrust. “I’m going to come... Fuck Blue!” he roars with no fear of the Nightmares prowling the surrounding area. I hold him to me as he empties himself down my throat, a small whimper escaping him with each finishing suck I deliver.

“Fucking Christ,” he pants once I release him. He stares at me, eyes wide and wild. “I don’t even know what to say. I feel like a thank you is in order, but would also be the dumbest thing I could do right now.” I giggle softly, tucking a lock behind my ear.

“How about you answer a question instead?” I say shyly. His expression darkens and his eyes roll.

“And here I thought it was my job to be the cunning, unfair one. Impressive,” he mutters.

“I’m not being unfair,” I huff. “Firefly, I’m just trying to connect with you. I thought maybe if I did this–”

“What?” he snaps. “That if you let me come in your mouth, I’ll open my wounds to you? Jesus, Blue.”

I fight back tears, frustrated over the fact that I just did something for him and he still refuses to open up to me. I wipe the remnants of his come from my sore mouth, hurt by his reluctance to be honest with me.

“I thought we were getting closer to each other Firefly,”

“You would be wise to stop thinking that way, to maybe re-evaluate your thoughts on the Boogeyman.” I flinch at his harsh words, but I’m undeterred.

“Fire—”

“I *am* the Boogeyman!” he snaps in a tone I know is meant to strike fear in me, but it doesn’t. I don’t fear him. Maybe that’s foolish of me,

to not fear someone so obviously deadly, but I don't care. This man cut my lips free. He saved my rat, watches over me while I sleep, and he was even willing to kill the closest thing he has to a friend for me. He can be the mean old Boogeyman out there in Nightmare or Dreadmoor, but not with me. With me, he's Firefly. And I don't fear my Firefly.

I rush to stand on my tiptoes as I stare up at him, forcing him to face me. "Not with me, you aren't," I whisper softly, my voice almost a snarl as I stare into his eyes, the green specks flickering around his dark irises, burning with hesitation and pain. "Never with me." I press my lips to his, gripping his neck, refusing to let him go.

He groans, trying to pull away. "Blue," he whimpers.

"Stop," I breathe into him. "Stop fighting. Stop resisting. Just be with me." I kiss him harder, begging him to surrender to me.

"I—" He stops kissing me back, his hands holding my face firmly. "I can't resist you," he whispers. "Fuck, Blue. I—" He pulls away, stepping back as his head hangs low, his dark hair hiding his eyes. Pain seeps from his being, filling the cave with sorrow.

I step towards him, gently lifting his face as his eyes look at me. "Nothing can change how I see you, Firefly. *Nothing*."

He gently touches my hand, removing it with a heavy sigh. "Fine," he relents while he studies me. I wonder what he sees in my face that fascinates him so. He does this from time to time, where he'll just stare at me; his eyes will look so deep, like he's searching for something. "She was lonely, wanted a—companion. So, she made me, customized just to her liking. No button eyes, no little switch inside that forces me to want to serve her. All those doll-like details were for creations after me. Her whole purpose for making me, my purpose for existing, was to be by her side, to be something that loved her while she did as she pleased. A mindless whore." I shudder as his hand reaches out and touches a lock of my hair.

"A-And?" I manage, my mouth feeling dry. I don't like this feeling bubbling inside me; a mix of anger and sadness. *Is this... jealousy?* No. Me, jealous of my Creator for wanting Firefly to love her? I look at him, examining every detail closely. *Is that why I'm so attracted to him? Because she is? Because I'm an extension of her? But I didn't obey her—*

He drops his hand, watching me closely. "Think about it, Blue. No one capable of free will could love such a monster as her. I fought her advances, resisted her tricks, seeing straight through her lies and evil. I refused to be what she wanted. Like you, I was banished, sent here to Nightmare to rot. That is, until the game started." He continues to twirl my hair absently, his eyes now focused on his hand in my hair.

"Game?"

"The game she and I have been playing for a long time. She tries to

keep me here, sending her Nightmares and creations to hunt me down and kill me. I try to get there, to Dreadmoor, to kill her myself and end this sick game once and for all. Just imagine, Blue, if I could do it. I'll be able to take over Dreadmoor and end the madness of it all." He grins lightly, tapping my nose. "Very poetic, if you ask me. The creator's first creation being her end."

"Did you ever love her?" I manage over the hard lump in my throat, focusing only on that single fact: he was created for *her*.

Firefly studies me again before shaking his head. "No, never. I'll admit, there was a time in my infancy of creation where I wasn't filled with an absolute hatred for her like I am now, but that was short-lived."

"Why?" He flinches at my poking. I know reliving his past is hard, that this is the part of the story he doesn't want to talk about, but I needed to know.

"The kids," he whispers softly as his hand drops from my hair. "I never got over the kids." I nod softly, understanding completely.

"I broke one of her portals and sent a little boy home," I confess while leaning closer to him. "I was always trying to save them, helping them escape her and her toys. I never did fall in line and do as I was told. I always thought there was something wrong with me for it, but I guess I just never fully fell under her spell. She always hated me. For looking different, being imperfect, not behaving. Breaking the portal was the final straw. That's why she sent me here. It was my death sentence, I guess. To think, when I first arrived, I feared running into you, hearing the stories of the Boogeyman." I laugh dryly.

Firefly releases a long breath. "You should've listened to those stories." He pauses, tilting his head ever so lightly. "I wish I had been as heroic as you." *Heroic? Me?* I feel my cheeks burn at his words as his eyes darken.

"Adam." He says the name like it pains him. "He was twelve. His parents moved to a new house and left him home a lot. You know how it is: their loneliness calls to her, like blood in the water." I nod, knowing all too well how these stories end. "Adam came over, and no matter what I said or how hard I tried to convince him it was all a trick, I couldn't get him to stay away. He'd always come back, saying how he'd rather be there than go back home alone. Because he had me. Adam and I would sit in his other room there in Dreadmoor at night, playing games. He had this pair of dice." Firefly pulls out the same pair I had stolen from Dreadmoor. "We would sit there and play with dice while I tried to convince him to go home and lock the portal. Every night, he'd say he'd think about it, but he always came back."

"What happened?" I ask cautiously, already knowing how this

story ends.

Firefly sighs as he runs his hand through his hair, tugging at the ends. “He left these in a bag on his nightstand, and he went to get his button eyes sewn on. I never saw him again.”

I reach my hand out to cover his and squeeze softly. “I’m sorry, Firefly. I know that must’ve been hard.”

“It was a long time ago,” he whispers, his thumb running over my knuckles. “It was shortly after Adam’s disappearance, when the Spinster came to my room and crawled into my bed while I slept. She grabbed my cock and—” I watch him shift uncomfortably and move away, shame and embarrassment covering his face.

“Did she—”

“I didn’t want to be with her, Blue, I swear, but she wouldn’t stop. I was barely awake, barely able to resist. I-I got hard, though, so obviously—” I stop him from continuing that preposterous reasoning by covering his mouth with my hand.

“Don’t you dare say that.” The sentence burns in my throat, my anger and hatred for our creator seething within me. “You *know* that’s not true. You can’t control that.” How dare she do such a thing to him? His gaze avoids mine, and I feel his jaw setting like stone. He gently grabs my wrist and pulls my hand from his mouth, shame and hurt consuming him more than I thought possible.

“After that night, she started her nightly visits. Sometimes, I’d fight her, try to tell her no and force her from my bed, failing as I always did. But other times... I don’t know. I was so mentally beat that I just didn’t care. I eventually stopped fighting, retreating in on myself as a darkness took hold of me and hollowed my body into this shell, a puppet for her to control. It was only when I felt like dying, ending my torment, that I started rolling the dice. Odds, I fought, even, I laid there, letting her do as she pleased until there was nothing left of me to use. One night, I was rolling the dice, and they both ended up catching in this crack in the floor. My roll was stuck, and I felt so much panic. But I took it as a sign, one that I was done being this monster's sex toy. So, I hid, and when she came into the room, I fought her. I ripped out one of her button eyes and ran. I knew it didn’t matter where I ran; she would find me. Dreadmoor is her world, after all, but it didn’t stop me from running. Even the smallest glimmer of hope was all I needed. And so I ran until she eventually found me. Instead of killing me on the spot, she gave me an option: return her eye and stay with her, *love* her, and rule Dreadmoor forever by her side, or be banished to the Nightmare world and live a never-ending life of fear.”

“You chose here, I’m assuming.”

He chuckles as his fingers run over the dice. “I rolled for it. Odd, I

stay, even, I go. Rolled snake eyes and thought I was finally free. She didn't like that outcome. She stole my dice and had her toys strap me down, chained for days as they covered me in these tattoos. Their needles dug deep, covering every inch of my skin, bleeding me out in the process. The pain was excruciating, far worse than any I'd ever experienced. Once they finished marking me, she forced me to walk behind her, chained like a dog as the metal rubbed the fresh ink, dragging me to the portal. She asked me one last time if I wanted to stay." He smirks. "I spat at her feet and ran through the blinding light. Couldn't leave her fast enough. Unfortunately, I nearly died getting through. It took forever for my tattoos to heal, not to mention the constant fight to survive."

"How long ago was that?" I ask softly while running my fingers over his knuckles.

"A lot longer than you'd believe, dollface. You know how it is—us creations, we don't age. We live or die, whichever she chooses." I nod. I was nearly half a century old myself, a baby amongst the creations, having heard the tales of the Boogeyman since the day I was created. Stories of him have been spoken for centuries, detailing him as an old, cryptic monster. I could only imagine his true age, being the first.

"Blue," he sighs as I look at him. "I've shared more with you than the very bugs in my basement. I'm tired and all fucking talked out. Shit, I'd willingly take on a Nightmare if it means getting out of here and taking you back home." I huff out a laugh but take no offense to his words. I know what he just shared with me was something big, something painful and meaningful, something he planned to take with him to his death. Him opening up, telling me his past, truly makes me believe that maybe—just maybe—I'm not the only one falling here.

"Your ass stays here until I come back, or I'm tying you up." He grins. "And not in a fun way." He winks.

"Fine but hurry up. I don't like being alone in the dark." I carefully sit down, preparing for the darkness to take over in his absence. Firefly lifts one of the many hanging sheets, revealing a small cage with a green dragonfly inside. He opens the tiny cage, and it lands perfectly on his hand as he walks back, rotating my hands as he places it in my open palms. I smile at the glowing green dragonfly, watching as the color transforms from green to blue.

"Didn't think I'd leave you all alone now, did you?" I grin like a child, watching the dragonfly flutter its wings in my hand. "I'll be back, promise." He kisses my forehead before leaving the cave. I continue to smile at the dragonfly as it rests in my hand, watching the glow trickle onto my skin, the color a faint blue.

"I really am in love with him," I whisper to the bug in confidence.

Chapter 10

Firefly

The same dragonfly from the cave sits atop my hand. I stare at it, listening to its chittering, repeating Blue's words to me. She has no idea the bugs can communicate with me. That they're my little spies here in Nightmare, constantly watching her when I can't.

"Boss needs to be careful," Havoc hisses from behind, standing at the base of the staircase to the basement. "Dolly is a glass doll, shattering with the smallest crack."

The dragonfly flies from my hand, joining the wall filled with my other insects as I turn and face her, her sharp teeth on full display, ready to bite. "Since when did it become wise for you to tell me what I should and shouldn't do? You should be thankful she stood up for you before. Touch her again, Havoc, and not even Blue will save you from the hell I will unleash."

The psychotic minion cackles, tossing her head back in a feverish expression of her insanity. "Boss couldn't hurt Havoc if he wanted!" She snaps her teeth, taunting me. *Oh, is that what she thinks?* My hands ball into fists at my side as I begin to charge toward her. *We'll see about that.*

"Careful." A devil tail wraps around my arm, pulling me back. I whip my head around to see Sullen, arms crossed, as he stands and watches me. "Havoc's right, boss. You're playing a very dangerous game with that doll." I pull his tail, yanking the demon close, gripping him by the throat. He smiles, seemingly unfazed by the threat of me, his tongue running over the front of his teeth as a knowing smirk pulls at his lips. "It's been a long time since you've acted out. You hunger for it, don't you?"

"For what?" I growl, gripping his throat tighter.

His demon tail taps my hand, holding my knife within its grasp. "For pain. You haven't murdered any creations since *her* arrival, not like before. Not like our nightly hunts. Some would say you're going soft." *Soft?* I grip my knife and release the demon, watching as he falls to the ground, coughing. He grins up at me, his face painted with a sinister smile. "Quit playing these childish games. Kill the doll. End her life, pluck out those eyes and put them in the jar with the rest of them."

“I’m not killing Blue!” I snarl.

“Blue?” Charisma steps from the shadows to Sullen’s side, helping him to his feet. “Since when are we referring to the dolls by their given names now?” They click their tongue, looking me up and down. “Have we been breaking the rules of the game, boss? Or are you playing a different game with that toy?”

I raise my knife, the tip kissing the underside of Charisma’s chin. “You better watch your fucking mouth.”

“Or what?” They raise a brow. “We fear the Boogeyman, not a *Firefly*.” My face drops as Blue’s name for me falls from their mouth.

“I am the Boogeyman!” I yell, pushing the blade against their skin, purple blood dripping down their neck as Sullen hisses at me.

Charisma slightly tilts their head, their lavender eyes flickering with eagerness as they lean close, pushing the blade deeper into their neck. “Not to *her,* you aren’t,” they slowly drawl, the words like a taunting whisper, before slowly back away from my knife, their eyes glowing as they step into the shadow, laughing.

Sullen begins to back away, his laughter echoing Charisma’s as he fades away alongside them into the darkness, leaving only Havoc and myself.

“Pretty Charisma is right, boss.” I sigh, rolling my eyes as I turn to face her. Havoc begins to circle me with exaggerated steps. “Dolly doesn’t see you as you are. Only a light. Time to fix things.” She taps my knife.

“I’m not killing her, Havoc.” I grit out, the urge to set all three of these fuckers ablaze becoming almost too much to fight.

“Better than the truth flying free as a moth. Not all is as it seems.” She begins to tap her button eye, creating an odd rhythm with her finger. “Boss must do a bad thing.” She sings, her voice melting as something cold begins to wash over me. “You must kill the doll. Kill the doll.” Her vision morphs into another, commanding me as I stand still, entranced, hearing only the command given to me.

“Kill. The. Doll.”

I turn, placing my mask over my face, turning to look at Havoc over my shoulder as I raise my knife, staring back into my reflection—the reflection of the Boogeyman.

“Kill the doll,” I repeat.

I MUST’VE BLACKED out or something, I... I don’t know. I don’t recall traveling at all, but here I am, outside Blue’s window, perched in my

spot on the old tree that scratches across the stained glass. I'm crouched, wearing my suit and holding my knife, my thoughts blurring and running into one another, creating a murky fog of confusion. My hand moves, pushing the glass window open as I effortlessly slide inside. Her room is unusually dark and empty, no sign of her within it. *Where are you?*

The sounds of my heavy breathing fill my ears as I stare through the scratchy eye holes of my mask, searching for her. I slowly and carefully open the bedroom door, waiting for her to make a sound. Nothing.

My feet carry me down the hall, checking every room as I silently open each of the doors, finding only darkness, dust, and silence. *Where are you?* I continue to search until the entire second story of the home is cleared. Something clatters down below, catching my attention.

"This way, Mr. Whiskers. It seems a bigger needle is needed to fix this mess," her voice trails up the stairs as the sound of a door opens then closes, her footsteps quickly fading away. *She's heading into the basement.* I quietly descend the stairs, purposely avoiding the known squeaky steps, and step onto the first floor. I need to be careful, to avoid her hearing me coming.

Kill the doll.

It's all I hear in my head, the voice sounding like Havoc's, but it's not. It's a morphed, tainted with a ghastly voice that I both know yet can't pinpoint. All I know is, the command is more than a command. It's as though my body is out of my control, like I'm watching myself head to the basement from outside of my body and am physically unable to stop myself. A shell.

Kill the doll.

I hush my feet, patiently moving to the old basement door, twisting the brass knob as I gently swing it open, only a faint creak coming from the hinges. The stairs are dark, a flickering light dances at the bottom.

There you are.

The trance haunting my mind carries me deeper, the door silently shutting behind me as I walk further, stepping into the ominent space. The sound of her shuffling around as she talks to her stuffed rodent drowns out the small sounds of the creaking staircase as I finally step onto the basement floor and see her. She's scurrying around with a single lit candle, searching shelves of stuffed animals and jars, brushing aside odd taxidermy tools and dust while murmuring to herself and that stupid rat—completely unaware of her surroundings. I quietly approach the long wooden table, noticing her rodent, its arm hanging loosely from its body. She must be down here in hopes of repairing that stupid fucking rat. A soft chuckle escapes me, and it's so

effortless, unlike anything I've felt since being in the treehouse with Havoc. I can't help it though, the ridiculous amount of fondness she has for that dead thing is... adorable.

Blue whirls around, surprised to see me, her candle flickering as she remains frozen, taken back by my appearance in my suit. "F-Firefly?" she whimpers, unsure of how to feel. Her eyes fall to my hand, watching as I squeeze my knife tight. "W-what're you doing?"

I tilt my head, my mind stuck in a loop of the same command, consuming my being: *Kill the doll*. I step toward her, a rumble vibrating in my chest as I prepare my stance, ready to strike. Something deep inside my soul starts to pound against my chest, fighting my motions.

Kill the doll.

This isn't right. I don't want to do this. I can't do this.

"Firefly," she softly cries, and she must realize what I'm about to do, as the color drains from her beautiful face.

Blue steps back, her hand shaking as it holds the candle, causing the flame to quiver as shadows jolt around us, her eyes searching for a way out. There is none, as I purposely positioned my body and blocked her way to the basement door. "T-this isn't you." Her words tremble. I raise my knife, pointing it directly at her, a voice whispering around in my head as my own suddenly appears, telling it to stop.

Kill the doll. Kill the doll!

No, don't listen. Don't do this. You can't do this to her!

My neck jerks as I twitch, trying to force them both aside and focus. "Please," she cries, fear and betrayal soaking her voice, it's a vice around my heart. "Don't do this."

The voices grow louder, arguing in my ears as I struggle to concentrate, groaning as my head is consumed with pain. "I-I don't have a choice," I grunt, my eyes beginning to burn, my face on fire from the mental war raging inside my brain. I rip my mask from my head, the instant relief of cold air hitting my face as I inhale, breathing it in. Sweat rolls down my face as I stare at her, my arm now trembling as I begin to realize what's happening. I glare at my hand, still holding my knife out and tremble at the reality.

This isn't me.

"S-she got to me," I whisper in astonishment. "She's got to me, Blue. And I-I can't stop her." Hissing scratches my brain as I toss my head around, groaning aloud, struggling to hear Blue's words through the voices.

"Firefly... " She sets the candle down, stepping in my direction.

"Stay back!" I lunge without thought, barely missing her. "Don't come any closer, Blue! I-I can't stop myself." My words are drenched

in absolute torment. My body is shaking; all I want is to run away from her and yet my body refuses to move. All I can do is continue to fight to stand still, a fight that I'm quickly losing.

"Listen to me, Firefly. This isn't you. You wouldn't hurt me."

"Wouldn't I?" I strain, my body moving closer to her despite my protest. "I'm the Boogeyman, remember? I kill people. Creations." *Kill the doll*. My head burns, aching from fighting her voice. "Her claws are here," I tap at my temple. "They're in my brain, her needles sinking into me, tearing it apart. I-I can't stop her, Blue." A tear, something I haven't experienced since the night the Creator forced herself on me, rolls down my cheek.

"She can't control you anymore, Firefly. You're free." She steps closer, risking her safety to comfort me.

Fucking Christ, Blue. Please stop. Please stop moving toward me. Run the other way. I don't deserve her love. I don't deserve her devotion, her trust... I don't deserve her.

"Stop," I plead, fighting with all my strength. "She's going to make me kill you. I don't want to but... I-I have no control. Please, I don't want to do this. Please..." She ignores my desperate warning, moving closer. My arm tenses, swinging a second time without my control, my knife slicing Blue's arm. She gasps, grabbing her flesh as blood begins to seep down her skin. "Blue!" I cry out, reaching for her, watching as she stumbles back away from me, the look of pure terror on her face... this moment will be what haunts my nightmares until my heart stops. If there is a hell beyond this one, her look of betrayal will be on a constant loop, driving my soul mad for all eternity.

She glances up at me, gripping her arm, her eyes filled with terror and brimming with tears. "I'm so sorry," I choke out. Seeing her hurt, by me—terrified—it's my breaking point. It shatters something inside me, freeing me from whatever trance had haunted me as I'm suddenly able to take a breath on my own.

My heart jolts at the sight of Blue before me. Whatever hold or spell the Spinster had over me, is ripped away as I fall to my knees, dropping my knife at Blue's feet. It's an instant relief, feeling her vanish from my being. My body feels lighter, darkness clearing from my heart and leaving nothing but fear behind. *She was able to reach me.*

"Forgive me," I whisper, dropping my head in absolute shame for what I've done to Blue. "I'm weak." The truth falls from my lips, taking the air from my lungs as I remain there, humbled by the realization that even here, in Nightmare, I am not out of her grasp. She can always find me. There's no winning the game, and she knows it. She knew I'd never win and yet still toyed with me, all these years, playing me like the fool I was.

Blue's hand touches my chin, raising it as I look up at her, my eyes stinging from regret and hatred for myself. For hurting her. "Firefly," she says my name with absolute innocence and serenity, her voice like an angel pulling me from the darkness. I'm unworthy; she should turn and leave me in this darkness. I am no Firefly. That man is nothing but a fantasy.

"I'm so sorry." My voice cracks on a sob as I stare up at her. "I'm so fucking sorry, Blue." My head slams against her stomach, my arms wrapping around her waist, pulling her close as I unleash all my emotions, my trauma, all the pain I've buried inside and tried to lock away for centuries. It all rushes to the surface and boils over, consuming me as I sit here and cry against her body, soaking her dress in my flowing tears. Something breaks inside me, shattering into a million pieces, and the only way to fix it—to fix me—is her.

My Blue.

And the worst part of it all is that I almost took that way. I almost lost the only chance I have at saving myself.

"Firefly..." She slowly curls her arms around my head, her hesitation to embrace me only adding to the overwhelming amount of guilt drowning me. "Are you okay?"

My eyes shoot to her face, shocked by her selfless question. "Me?" I question as she wipes my face. She's so fucking gentle with her fingers as she smiles softly at me. I grab her hand, completely taken back. "Blue, I-I just attacked you. I came in here, possessed like one of her fucking *toys,* and could've killed you. And-d you're sitting here, asking if *I'm* okay?"

Blue tilts her head. "Firefly, I know that wasn't you." She grips my arms, pulling me from her waist as she slides to her knees, positioning herself perfectly in front of me. The two of us sit, kneeling before one another, two damaged creations trying to find a purpose to our existence.

"I know you. I know your heart." She presses her hand to my chest, giggling at its rapid beat. "You won't kill me, because—" She stops, biting her lip.

"Because what?" I ask weakly. Her cheeks burn with embarrassment. How can she be embarrassed after everything we'd been through? After what I just did to her? "Hey." I reach my hand out, trying with everything I have to calm the shaking as I gently touch her chin. "Rule number three."

She nestles her face against my palm, shooting me a playful expression. "Don't be quiet? I don't think that rule really applies here."

"Doesn't it?" I force a smile; her joy is infectious. "What is it?" I press.

“Well… ” Her fingers begin playing with the various loose strings of my burlap suit as she refuses to look at me. “You won’t hurt me, because you like me.” Her eyes immediately shoot to me, the words hitting my heart like a sack of bricks as I see the nervous apprehension in her buttons, waiting.

Blue knew I wouldn’t kill her—because I like her.

Do I like her? I mean, I liked having sex with her. And listening to her laugh—God, it’s a breath of fresh air. I like being around her, even if she is attached to that disgusting, half-stuffed rodent she can’t seem to live without. I like stalking her, thinking about her when I’m alone, especially when I’m pleasing myself. I like sitting outside her window as she sleeps, making sure no one bothers her. I like keeping her safe, protecting her—

Fuck. I don’t just like her– I’m *obsessed* with her. The feel of her body, the sounds she makes and the way she tastes on my tongue. I’m addicted, intoxicated by her scent, that ridiculous laugh of hers, and the way she makes me feel seen. Not just the colors on my skin, or the ones I make her see, no, she sees *me*, and I’m entranced by her.

“Firefly?” My name falls from her lips, pulling at my chest, the way she formed the sounds perfect and sensual. “You *do* like me, don’t you?” Her fingers weave through my hair, patiently waiting.

Seeing her here, kneeling before me, selfishly ensuring my own safety before her own and still looking at me the way she always does —I can’t deny it. I can’t keep lying to myself, pretending that I don’t feel what my heart is doing. Yeah, my cock reacts to her in a way unlike anyone else, but my heart–well, that’s something new, something I have never experienced before. I don’t just like her. She consumes every ounce of my very being. Her existence breathes life into my dead soul, peeling me from my own darkness and showering me in her warmth. Fuck, I don’t just want her. No, I need her. She’s mine, all mine. I never want to share her, or the way I feel, with anyone else. Ever.

“Yeah, I think I do like you,” I whisper, running my thumb along her lower lip. Her eyes flash, a soft, happy little gasp brushing past my finger from her mouth. My words are exactly what she wants to hear, and it pleases me to give it to her. I want to say more, to give her more, the unbearable urge to confess all my sins to her as I beg on my knees to be worthy of her affection.

“Blue?” She peers up at me, the ends of my dark hair brushing against her forehead as I lean in close. “Can I tell you a secret?”

She nods, leaning into me, reaching for a kiss. I can’t help but to smile, knowing how her body must be twisting with eagerness, wanting to feel mine. And for the first time in, well, ever, I don’t want to just fuck her. I want to be honest with her. No games, no dice, no

pressure. I just want to open myself up, carve out my heart, and lay it at her feet. I take a large breath, preparing for the enormous emotional unload I'm about to profess.

"Blue, I—" Admitting my feelings is a lot harder than I expected. My throat closes, my heart racing with anticipation and nerves, consuming me. My jaw clenched, tightening to hold back my voice. I grip the back of her neck gently, my veins bulging as I resist myself. *Why is it so hard to admit? To simply speak the words?*

"Firefly?" I swallow my fear. *Now or never.*

"I think I don't just like you." Her eyes study mine, her cheeks slowly fading to a bright, burning red. "I—"

Before I can speak further, she shoots forward, slamming her lips against mine, cradling my face with her hand as she kisses me with such impressive force. Every restraint and hesitation in my body melts away as I embrace her, kissing her back twice as hard.

"I love you too," she breathes into my mouth. I don't even have to say it; Blue knows exactly how I feel. I think she always has.

"God." I struggle to breathe, pressing into her body as we kiss with such a passion, I feel as though I've lost all the strength in my body. "I told you you'd be my undoing." She giggles into my mouth, causing me to do the same, the flood of such a range of emotions leaving me exposed.

My hand brushes along her arm, her body jolting as she flinches. I realize where I touched—the mark I left on her with my knife. My blood runs cold, my face hardening as I stare at the fresh wound, my happy mood returning to one of self-hatred.

"Hey." She catches the direction of my gaze and tries to calm me. "It's okay. Look." She rotates her arm, pretending it didn't hurt. "Nothing a little needle and thread can't fix." Blue kisses my nose, standing and approaching the table. *Needle and thread.*

"Let me." I shoot to my feet, walking over to the table.

"What?"

I quickly remove my suit and gloves, kicking the uncomfortable material aside, shoving the negative thoughts away all the same. I place a hand on her lower back, plucking the threaded needle from her fingers. "I made the cut, now let me fix it." It was more a command than a choice.

Before she can tell me no, I grip the needle between my teeth and pick her up, placing her on the table, watching as her tits bounced. *Fucking control yourself.* I have to force my eyes away, my pants tightening as I try to swallow my horniness.

"Let me see," I say thickly as she raises her arm, laying it in my hands as I examine the cut closely. "You know this will hurt, right?"

She gives me a simple shrug. "I've learned to just embrace it.

Besides, I kind of like the pain," she teases, smirking at me. I can't stop my laughter, both turned on and impressed by her taunting.

I retrieve the needle from my teeth, my free hand gripping her arm carefully as I pierce the sharp point into her flesh. She winces, inhaling sharply as I push the metal through, the thick thread quickly following. I continue to sew the cut, noticing her hands as she squeezes them tight, fidgeting her legs. I cross the thread across itself in a repeating X pattern until the whole cut is sewn shut. I pull the thread, tying it into a knot before biting it with my teeth, kissing the cut gently.

"There, all fixed."

Blue examines her arm. "Impressive."

"I think it's fair to say we all know how to sew." I chuckle, crossing my arms. "Plus, I've had some time to practice. You think that suit of mine is the first?"

"You sewed your own suit?"

"Well don't sound too surprised, dollface." I wedge myself between her legs, spreading them wide. My hands grip the top of her thighs, her body slightly leaning back, inviting me to ravish her, and I want to. My mouth reaches for her neck, my breath hitting her skin as it prickles at the feel of my breath. I run my lips along the shape of her jaw, feeling her body tighten and her breathing increase.

"Blue," I exhale, listening as she whimpers at the sound of her name falling from my lips. "I know you know how I feel, but I want to show you. To prove that I will always protect you, and *never* hurt you again. I want to show you just how much I am yours."

"Firefly." God, I want her to speak my name for the rest of eternity, over again and again. "You don't have to do anything."

"Yes, I do," I growl, gripping her face with my hands and kissing her fiercely. I kiss her so hard, it hurts, running my tongue along hers, our moans mixing into one. "I want to be your Firefly," I pant as she presses her breasts against my chest, pulling me closer, wrapping her legs around my waist. "Until the end of time."

She whimpers, a tear falling from her eyes and onto my face as I lick it, tasting her salty emotions. "You already are."

"Ah." I peel my mouth from hers. "But the world doesn't know that. At least, not yet." My eyes crawl back to the table as I pick up the needle, holding it between us. "Needle and thread."

She watches me, both confused and curious, as I thread the needle while staying perfectly positioned between her soft thighs. "What're you—Firefly!" she cries out, watching as I pierced the skin across my chest, dragging the thread through it, grunting at the welcomed pain. "Stop!" She reaches out, grabbing my hand.

I laugh, watching as she tries to pry my hand away. "It's okay,

Blue." I continue to stitch myself, creating a line. "I'm just making sure everyone knows exactly who I belong to."

"What do you mean?"

"Well..." I push the pointed tip though my flesh, tiny beads of blood forming as I pull it across, the thread sliding under my skin. "I'm going to stitch my owner's name, right over my heart." I flash her a grin, winking. "Because, let's face it, dollface, you own me."

She releases a soft gasp. "Firefly," she wheezes, her fingers touching mine. "I–I—"

"Blue..." I brush her cheek, tucking her hair behind her ear. "I've never felt this way about anyone, ever. I've wandered this desolate world for centuries, convinced love was just some sick game two people played, pretending that it existed when it didn't. But you..." I swallow, forcing back more tears. "You proved me wrong. You showed me that love is real, and that I'm not only lucky enough to be loved by you, but to feel it myself."

My free hand grips her neck, squeezing with a tough sincerity as I blurt the words out. "I love you, Blue. And to prove it, to you and everyone else, I'm going to sew your name across my heart so every damn soul in this world and the next knows exactly who it belongs to."

"Then sew me," she whispers.

"What?" Her words confuse me, taking me completely back.

Blue carefully removes my hand from her neck, taking the needle, and digging halfway through my skin, pulling it as the thread follows. "I'll sew my name onto you." She continues to stitch my flesh, creating the letter B. "And then you can sew your name onto me, letting everyone know who I belong to." She bites her lower lip, tugging the needle, yanking the thread as I grunt at the pain.

"Oh, careful," I warn her, my cock aching as it presses even harder against my pants.

She scoots closer to my body, purposely rubbing against me, snatching my chin, forcing me to look at her.. "Why don't you just sit there like a good boy and let me sew my name?"

"Yes ma'am." My brow raises, enjoying her surprisingly dominating command.

Blue continues to pull the needle and thread, stitching her name across my chest. Blood trickles down my skin as my hands hold her ass tight, gripping her harder every time she tugs at the thick thread, pulling my skin. "There." She wipes her forehead before leaning down and biting the thread with her teeth. "Perfect." She beams with pride, admiring her handiwork.

I glance down, her name sewn in such a delicate manner across my chest. My fingertips traced the letters, noticing a tiny heart that flicks

off from the last letter in her name. “Nice touch,” I smile, appreciating her personal flare.

“Now you do me.” Blue holds the needle and spool of thread up, her face filled with a giddiness I haven’t seen from her in awhile.

“Are you sure?” I ask, taking them from her. She nods her head, confident in her decision. “Alright then, but I’m not sewing my name across your chest.”

“Wha—why not?” She huffs.

“Because,” I lean forward. “I like your breasts exactly as they are. Even if it is my name, I’m not fucking with something as perfect as these,” I run my tongue over her bulging breasts, sitting perky under her dress. “Pick a different spot.”

She collects herself, thinking it over.

“You pick.”

“That’s not what I said,” I purr, grazing my hands up her thighs and beneath the skirt of her little dress. Her mouth gapes open, reacting to my touch.

“There,” she whimpers.

I stop, my hand resting across her thighs. “Here?” I squeeze, her fingers digging into the edge of the table.

“Yes.”

“You got it, dollface.” I pull her tights from her legs, lifting her skirt as I kneel down and nestle myself between her thighs. “Bet you like seeing me on my knees, my head buried between your legs.” My tongue runs up her inner thigh, watching as she shivers and drops her head back.

“Yes,” she breathes, causing me to adjust myself again, struggling to focus.

“You ready?” I ask, prepping the needle. She nods. “My name’s a little longer than yours, so if you need a break or want me to stop, just tell me.”

“I can handle the pain,” she jests. “Do your worst.” *Don’t play with me*.

I hide my smile, propping her right leg over the other, piercing the needle into the outer part of her thigh as she fainty gasps. “Why there?” she asks.

“Well.” I tug the string, her whimpers filling my ears as she tries to stay still. “If my name is between your legs,” I push the needle through again, “the only person who will see it,” I finished the first letter, beginning the next, “is me. And I already know you’re mine.”

I carefully continue sewing my name across her leg, Blue trying to muffle and hide her pain. The letters of my name stretch almost entirely down to her knee, cutting the thread as I finished the last letter. *Damn, my name is long.*

“There.” I lightly slap the fresh stitching, her breathing hitching as blood lightly drips down her leg. Seeing my name marked into her flesh invigorates me. Fuck, if I wasn’t already struggling to hold back before, I sure as hell am now.

“Don’t,” she whispers.

“What?”

Blue slides off the edge of the table, falling into me, forcing us to the floor as she straddles my face. “Don’t hold back.” She tosses her hair over her shoulders, leans back, and lifts her dress, widening her legs. “I’m yours.” *Damn straight you are*.

I waste no time, my tongue slithering along her pussy, wet from her excitement. Fuck, she tastes so good. I push through her lips, moving inside her as she pushes against my face, grinding her clit against my nose, adding to her arousal. Blue holds nothing back, her fingers pulling handfuls of my hair, moaning into the air. I feel my cock flex as she tightens around my tongue. I want to bury it deeper inside her sopping pussy, to really show her who she belongs to.

“Blue,” I breathe against her body. “Get on the table.”

“What?”

I impatiently force her forward as she falls over my face, catching her body with her hands. My body rotates, rolling with hers until she’s on her back, me hovering over her as her legs drape over my shoulder. I lean down, licking her from her ass all the way up, past her pussy to her stomach. “I said, get on the table.”

“Make me,” she snaps.

“Oh? You want to act like a brat, now, do you?” She giggles as I smile, fully enjoying this side of her. “Alright, then.” I gracefully lift her while getting to my feet. “Guess I’ll just have to move you myself.”

Blue squeezes her thighs around my face, holding tight, dodging the light fixtures hanging from the basement ceiling as I carry her to the table, swatting everything from the surface before slamming her atop it. She tries to adjust herself, but I grab her ankles, yanking her toward me, her legs dangling over the edge.

“Don’t move,” I growl, pacing around, searching the shelves for something to tie her down with. I can feel her eyes on me, watching as my hands discover strips of tanned leather scraps. I pick them up, testing their resilience, snapping the thick material. *Perfect*.

“W-what’re those for?” Blue asks, sitting up as I turn, playing with the long strips.

“I’m going to tie you down, and fuck you senselessly, until your throat burns from screaming my name and you can no longer stand.” I snap the leather again, her body jumping at the loud sound. “Think you can handle that, dollface?” Blue looks at the leather in my hands, a seductive smile curling from her lips as she slowly lays back, raising

her arms above her head. “That’s a good fucking girl.”

I tie the leather around the legs of the table, their length perfectly reaching her arms. I tug the leather tight, securing her wrists as they lay sprawled out above her head, leaving a little slack for her to move, her legs hanging from the edge perfectly. I couldn’t have designed a better sex position if I tried.

Returning to her legs, I slowly take my time, feeling her skin, raising her dress once more as my lips find their way to her thigh, kissing her softly. She moans gently, enjoying the way I touch her body. My mouth trails up to her lower abdomen, kissing her old stitches, my tongue running along the rough ridges. She arches her back, pulling against the leather straps.

“I want to touch you,” she whines.

“Oh, don’t worry.” My hands grab her hips, flipping her over onto her stomach, her arms now crossed ahead of her, the slack she had before now gone. “I’m about to make you feel so fucking good, you won’t be able to think of anything else. Besides, I’m punishing you for that little attitude. Can’t have you acting like a brat, now, can we?” I slap her ass, the loud impact ringing in my ears. “It's my turn to be selfish.”

My hands move her body closer to the edge, the leather pulling against me as I lift her dress, admiring the view. She’s dripping, fluorescent blue running down her lips. *Perfect.* I release my cock from my pants, the feeling of it being free adding to my excitement. It’s lightly dripping, my own elation boiling beneath my skin. I grip my cock, stepping toward her body, rubbing the tip against her opening. I can’t help but moan, feeling her softness against me. Her backside rises slightly, her head raising with each of her own moans. I push into her lightly, teasing her with the tip, fully enjoying myself as I listen to her cries.

“Tell me,” I pant, pulling the tip out before pushing back inside her pussy, repeating a few times, watching her wetness coat me and mix with my own. “Who do you belong to?” I ask, pushing a little deeper, my nails digging into her legs as I force myself to take things slow. I want to enjoy every second.

“You,” she breathes.

I push deeper, slowly pulling back. “That’s right.” I slowly push myself inside her until I’m fully engulfed by that wet, tight, pretty little pussy. I lean against her back, gliding my tongue up her spine as she arches high, flexing around me, crying out softly. “You’re *mine*.” I bite down on her shoulder hard before quickly releasing and grabbing the back of her neck, pinning her down as I unleash all control and pull back, slamming back into her. I claw my fingers down her back and hold her hips, bracing myself.

Growls, grunts, and moans come from my mouth as I pound her pussy with all my might, fucking her harder than ever before. I can't help myself; something has ignited inside me, a new craving—for her. I have to feed the hunger, desperate to fill it, unable to tame it.

My speed increases as the table slams against the floor, grinding with each powerful thrust. I can feel myself boiling near the edge, my body sweating and burning as I try to force it back. *No, not yet.*

"Turn me over," Blue rasps out through her shaking pants as she tries to look back at me.

"I don't want to stop," I grunt, and fuck, honestly I don't know if I can stop anyway.

"Turn me over. I need to see you." I struggle to stop fucking her, forcing myself to pull out of her despite how fucking amazing she feels. I moan, dropping from her body as I step back, doing as she asks. She adjusts herself, turning over, enjoying my fully-erect cock as I stand before her, impatiently waiting. She grins, parting her legs wide, beckoning me. "Good boy."

"I'll show you a good boy," I growl, rushing to her, my hand gripping her neck as she smiles. She wraps her legs around my waist, kicking me closer as I lightly push inside her, her gasp allowing me to place my thumb inside her mouth. I thrust deeper as my thumb moves further down her mouth. "Do you want a gentle good little boy who fucks you delicately, playing all nice? Or do you want me to be a bad boy? To fuck you like a man, knowing exactly how to make you come all over my cock. Tell me. Which do you want, Blue? A good boy, or a bad boy?"

My thumb moves back and forth, inching further. "Bad," she speaks, her lips wrapping around my finger, sucking it harshly.

"Then keep your mouth busy while I shove my cock so far up that pretty little pussy of yours, you'll see stars." Her button eyes flicker as I drive into her, fucking her hard again as she tightens her grip around my waist, sucking my thumb as if it was my cock.

Her body tightens around me, her back arching as she grips the leather, pulling against them, and I know she's about to come. "Oh no, you don't. I told you, your orgasms are mine to give, and the only way I'm letting you come is with my own." I grip her thighs and unleash a monstrous rage of emotions, my heart racing, pushing against my chest. I feel as though I can't breathe, the surge of building excitement drowning me as I look down at her face. She's reflecting exactly what I feel, almost mimicking my expression. *God, she looks beautiful.*

"Blue... " I choke on her name, leaning down against her body as I continue to fuck her, nearing the edge. "I—fuck—"

"Firefly," she calls out, the two of us coming at the same time. We both cry out, almost screaming at the overwhelming climax as it rolls

through our bodies. I slow my pace, watching her moan as she stares into my eyes, contracting around me. I slam my mouth to hers, kissing her fiercely, eating her breath as she ingests my own.

A strange feeling comes over me as I feel as though I'm about to cry. Fuck, I really have fallen in love her.

Havoc

"Silly dolly and bug." I squash the skull of the dead man's face in, the pretty colors of his brains matching my nails. Pretty pink. "She sees all." I bend down, running my finger into the messy mess. *One taste*. My tongue stretches from my mouth, tasting the yummy brains. *Tasty little lost soul.*

"Havoc," pretty Charisma groans. "Do you always have to do that?" They motion to my bloody hand, inches from my mouth.

"Charisma should try brains once." I push my hand out, offering to their pretty little face. "Taste the brains!"

Charisma raises their hand, covering their mouth. "Not my style."

"Brains make Havoc smart. Boss could use them," I tease. *Silly games. Silly boss— no brains and yet two heads.*

"Boss really fucked the game up, playing with that toy." Sullen sneaks from the shadows, crouching down to see my masterpiece. "Let me guess, another lost soul?" he asks nicely. Such a nice demon. I nod profusely, licking the brains on my fingers. "Nice." He winks. Eyes of black. "Any idea where he is, Havoc?"

I crawl over the dead man's mess, my face so close to the devil, I could kiss him. But Havoc would never. Devil belongs to pretty Charisma, and Havoc doesn't like demons—or sharing. Unless it's a bloody orgy; then Havoc shares all the love. "Bug is buried inside his dolly, playing his own messy games." I cock my head.

"Gross," Charisma groans.

"Dolly and bug are lost in the cloud of *love*." I sing the word, seeing it spelled out in the air as something whispers in my ear. "Oh," I react, intrigued by whispers of a new game.

"What is it?" Sullen asks. *Such a curious devil.*

"Curiosity killed the cat you know, devil-boy!" I snap my teeth, scaring him as he falls onto his ass. I cackle, falling back, kicking my feet in the air. "Havoc got you!"

"Shut the fuck up, you clown," he grumbles.

"Havoc is a clown!" I shout, pointing to my pretty painted face. "See? Everybody loves clowns."

"Not me," he groans while standing.

My smile dims down. "Devil-boy loves no one except pretty

Charisma, his skeleton beauty." I snap my head, seeing Charisma. "Havoc does not blame Sullen. Such pretty bones."

"What's this new game, Havoc?" Sullen asks, annoyed.

"Do minions want to play the deadly game? Dice, needles, and webs. All connected and tangled together." Charisma and Sullen look at one another, confused.

Sad. No one gets Havoc. No one sees what Havoc does. If they did, the games would be so much more exciting!

"No, minions can't play this game. Too many players. Too many pawns."

"Who's playing this game, Havoc?" Charisma asks. "Boss? The doll? Someone else?"

"Secret!" I shush them, glancing around. "No one can know. Only Havoc. Many players, many stakes." I look around as I crouch down. "Only one will win in the end; the rest will die. Havoc doesn't want minions to die." The two minions exchange terrified glances. "Minions best run and play their own silly games. Leave the big kids to do their jobs."

"There's nothing big about you, Havoc," Charisma snarks, flipping their pretty feathers.

I grin, sharp teeth shining. "Havoc has one big thing." *One. Big. Thing.*

"The itsy-bitsy spider went up to Nightmare land. Down came the moon and squashed the bugs all out," my words sing as I crawl back into the darkness. "Spiders, webs, nightmares, buttons, needles and bugs. Oh, the itsy-bitsy spider."

Chapter 11

Firefly

"Blue!" The deafening roar of wind and the acrid stench of something burning fills my senses, drowning out my aching screams for her. My skin feels like it's on fire as I frantically search through the chaotic abyss. Smoke clouds my view and I can't see far ahead of me, but what I do see feels oddly familiar.

This place, it can't be Nightmare. Am I... in Dreadmoor?

"Firefly!" Blue's frantic voice slices through the air like an icy knife, filling me with terror and dread. I try to push through the smoke, but it only seems to thicken with each step, trapping me in this swirling, hellish inferno. And then I hear it—her blood-curdling scream so loud, it pierces through my soul.

"B-Blue!" I call out, my heart pounding in my chest. I desperately scan the area for any sign of her, frantically searching the chaos, but all around me is deathly silent, halting as the darkness settles and something draws near. I suddenly feel a cold, boney hand gripping my heart. A chill runs down my spine as a dark presence envelopes me, taunting me with its ominous presence. The wretched smell that follows tells me who it is, panic flooding my veins as her breath wraps around my neck. I spy her sharp grin from the corner of my eye, stretching as she whispers with a twisted glee, "Shall we play a game?"

My body jolts upright from the cold, hard floor. Sweat beads on my skin, drenching me in a sticky layer. My heart pounds so hard, I can feel it throbbing against my ribcage. In the dim glow of my skin, I can see my bugs, usually illuminated and buzzing with energy now motionless and quiet, as though something had dulled them.

"What's happening?" I pant, frantically trying to calm myself. I rake a hand through my damp hair, feeling disoriented and on edge. Something isn't right.

"Firefly?" Blue's voice startles me, and I turn to see her naked form curled up next to me. The sight of her brings a sense of relief and comfort to my frantic mind, calming it instantly.

"What's wrong?" She yawns while sitting up, rubbing her button eyes. The memories of my nightmare flood back—the smoke suffocating me, the overwhelming sense of despair, her screams for help. I swallow, remembering the voice I heard. The Spinster.

"Bad dream," I manage to choke out as I lay back down and pull her into my arms. She gives a sleepy chuckle and nuzzles into my chest, her fingers tracing her name gently. I don't want to worry her, especially after what happened in her basement, but something isn't right. I feel it in my bones.

"Can the Boogeyman even have a bad dream?" she teases gently, quickly falling back to sleep. I carefully stroke her thigh, feeling the sewn thread of my name as I press my lips to her head.

No, but her Firefly can.

My arms pull her body close, gently squeezing her tight as I bury my head into her hair, inhaling her scent as I try to calm myself back to sleep. The world slowly begins to fade away as we drift off, the sounds of my bugs chittering lightly creating a unique lullaby as something cackles, the sound echoing in the faraway distance, my consciousness slipping into absolute darkness.

MY EYES REMAIN SHUT as I carefully rotate, reaching for Blue. I feel around the floor, searching for her body, but it isn't there. "Blue?" I peel my eyes open, sleepily patting the ground. *Where are you?*

A slight panic seeps into my core as I quickly shoot up, searching around the dark room. My bugs are oddly quiet, their glow faint and flickering as if they have little to no power or energy. They're weak, but why? Everything feels off. Wrong.

"Blue?" I call out again, sleep fading from my brain as I realize I'm alone.

A strange pain throbs around my wrists, as if something is wrapped tightly around them, pulling tight. *What the hell?* I scan my skin, noticing no marks or reasoning for the pain. Deciding to ignore it, I grab my suit and race up the stairs, searching the treehouse, but there's no sign of her. *She must've gone home, but why didn't she wake me? I would've taken her.*

I dress in my suit and step outside into the dark, haunted woods, listening to the nightlife. A new pain begins to press against my temple as if someone is piercing it slowly. The ache is becoming all too consuming and disorienting. I grab my head, groaning. *What the fuck is happening?* An odd sense of fear washes over me briefly before rolling away. I try to shrug it off. Something tells me I need to speak to Havoc, but where is she?

I continue around the forest, searching the trees with no sign of her. Maybe she's near the portal? Has she snuck away to Dreadmoor

again, to bring back another lost soul to torture in one of her many games? Who knows with that little clown. Nothing about her is sensible or predictable.

Voices carry from ahead, whispering through the trees: Charisma and Sullen. If they're out here, then Havoc must be lingering nearby. The three minions are always lurking about together.

"Where is she?" I demand as I approach them, leaning against a tree trunk. I try to ignore the itchiness of my mask, the feel of it uncomfortable and annoying. The material has always bothered me, but since being around Blue and not wearing it as much, putting it on now is almost too much. It's like putting on another person's face, and I don't like that person.

"Gonna have to be more specific," Sullen states boredly while flipping a black button eye with his thumb like a coin. He seems frustrated, half trying to ignore my presence.

"Yeah." Charisma hums a tune as they polish their boot with... wait.

"Is that my fucking shirt?" I growl as Charisma flashes their bright teeth.

"What can I say? You have a non-abrasive fabric, perfect to get that perfect shine." They raised their boot high, the moonlight reflecting off the lavender leather as if it was a tinted mirror. "Anyway, who are you asking for again?" I give them a glare that, even though it can't be seen, I know they can feel, because a shudder runs over them before they cross their legs and continue polishing their boot. "Havoc isn't here," they quip. "She left early this morning, muttering something about toys, bugs, and big kid games. She was really frazzled, more than usual, and hasn't been back."

"Did it not occur to either of you to mention this to me before now?"

Sullen scoffs while shaking his head. "Why would we?" He raises the button high, widening his jaw before swallowing it whole, licking his lips. "You seem perfectly content with your new toy. Charisma and I aren't even sure what, if anything, we should tell you anymore. You don't act like our boss, not like you used to. You're always gone, playing with that doll, and now, the game is fucked. Havoc—believe it or not—still had marbles left in that ridiculous brain of hers. That is, until you started fucking that doll, sending what little sanity she had left flying out the window. Something's wrong with her, and if I were you," his tail points in my direction, "I would be worried about your little friend. Havoc is already a loose cannon, but light her fuse, and she's a bomb of chaos just waiting to explode. No one's safe with her running loose."

A grunt is my only response as I shift uncomfortably. The idea of

Havoc becoming even more unhinged is something I don't particularly enjoy or welcome. I do, however, *need* to find Havoc. There was something happening with her. Havoc and I need to have a serious discussion about what happened the other night with the Spinster getting into my head. It all started with Havoc's chattering, and with Sullen's eerie warning, I'm starting to think she may not be as dedicated to this side of the game as I initially thought. A scary thought to consider.

"I'm going to check on Blue." I push myself off the tree and start walking, ignoring their groans. "If Havoc shows up while I'm gone, sit on her until I get back." Sullen's tail salutes me as I walk off, leaving the couple behind me.

COCKING my head to one side, I stare through the thick glass at the dark room in confusion. Usually, she has a candle, or her fireplace lit, but there's nothing that shows she's in there. The room is deadly silent. *She wouldn't be wandering around by herself, would she?* I've told her before that it's dangerous for her to be traveling out here alone– not that she's known for listening.

Cracking my neck, I reach for the window, pushing it slightly open. I slip inside with ease, the immediate, eerily odd silence unnerving me. "Blue?" I call out, receiving no response. I remove my gloves as I cautiously walk to the small fireplace near her bed and grab a stray match, igniting the small twigs, watching the embers grow into a simple fire. I listened to the crackling wood as it pops, my eyes searching, finding everything as it should be, except no Blue.

No sign of Blue, or my dragonfly that usually follows her.

Where has the little dragonfly gone?

I listen for the fluttering bug but hear nothing. Strange, seeing as they're an extension of myself and under my influence. They always obey my command. They would never leave unless—

I immediately halt, dread and shock shooting up my spine as I notice a pair of torn and tattered wings at my feet, the glimmering membranes reflecting in the moonlight. My heart rate quickens as I bend down, carefully picking up the tattered pieces of the iridescent wing, examining them closely, as I instantly recognize them. My dragonfly. Blue's dragonfly.

"What happened?" I whisper, as the tip of the bug's wing begins to faintly glow, flicking with the faintest hint of life. The color of the wing changes from blue, then... a familiar magenta that strikes fear

into my very soul.

Havoc.

I stand up, my body feeling heavy as I drop the body of the dragonfly on the bed. Havoc was here. Sullen was right; she did something with Blue, and must've stopped my bug from telling me, knowing I would stop her. I turn to head back to the treehouse, the thought of Blue being in danger making me physically ill, when I notice something out of place from the corner of my eye.

"What the fuck!" I scream as I'm met with the horrific site of Blue's fucking rat, pinned to the wall above Blue's bed with a nail driven fiercely through his throat. Its button eyes are missing and its limbs are hanging on by the thinnest of threads. That bitch destroyed her stuffed rat. "You're a cock sucking psychopath, Havoc!" I roar, hoping that psychotic clown hears me.

I try to leave, but God fucking help me, I can't. Blue would never forgive me if I just left Mr. Whiskers there for her to find later. Sighing, I march over to the rodent and carefully pry him off the wall, the smell of its half-preserved insides mixing with its usual rank stench, making me gag.

"I. Fucking. Hate. You," I grit out as I carefully tuck the limp, mangy creature into Blue's nightstand before making my way back to the window and out towards my treehouse.

Immense pain shoots across my back, as if someone had kicked me hard, followed by an invisible punch to my face. I rubbed my cheek, confused by the strange pain and fear I feel as I'm alone and unharmed.

What the hell is happening?

"UNACCEPTABLE!" I roar as my arms fly over my desk, causing all the jars of my collected buttons and needles to shatter. Sullen is unfazed by my temper as Charisma simply rolls their eyes, annoyed by the mess I just made.

"I just polished these," Charisma hisses, flexing their boots.

"I'll murder you," I grit out, at my wits end. "But first, I'll murder your fucking shoes and make you watch." Charisma gasps, appalled at my threat before huffing. My body aches, stinging with some strange pain, as if someone has hung me up by hooks or strings, letting me dangle in the air as the weight of my body pulls against my skin. It's beyond uncomfortable, nipping at my anger.

"We told you, we haven't seen her!" the demon yells back.

“Then find her!” I scream, my fist slamming into the desk. “Where are they? And what the fuck are you two even doing?” I wrinkle my nose at the smell of... is that—popcorn? “Stop it! Whatever you’re doing, just stop!”

Sullen and Charisma exchange confused glances before looking back at me.

“Boss,” Sullen says slowly, his voice hard to hear over the echoing waves of strange, pounding music playing. It’s as if a circus is performing upstairs. “We’re not doing anything,” He slithers closer, looking me up and down, Charisma shadowing him. I shake my head and rub my ear while staring at the deadly couple.

“You don’t hear that?” I call over the loud noise, motioning around the air. “The music?” They both shake their heads. “Fuck. Do you atleast smell the popcorn?”

“Popcorn?” Charisma snickers. “Boss, I think you’ve finally lost it.” Charisma snorts and turns to walk away, but Sullen’s tail stops them as his black eyes narrow on me in suspicion.

“You know,” his eyes roam over me, stepping closer as his face darkens with a sinister smile. “Sharing needles can lead to some rather... unfortunate side effects. No one should share needles; even I know that.” Even with the music blaring in my ears, I still hear the snark in his tone.

“What?” I growl out while rubbing my nose, the smell of popcorn twisting into something burnt and charred, more pricks pulling at my flesh.

“You trading stitches with the toy?” he asks, and I let the slur go only because of his question. “Feeling things that aren’t there? Hearing things?”

“What does that matter?” I ask as Charisma clicks their tongue while shaking their head.

“Like a moth lured in by the siren’s call of fire, blind to the searing torture that awaits. A shared needle and thread—a futile attempt to mend two broken creations, only to end up ensnared together in a web of agony.” I blink, shaking my head.

“You fucking sound like Havoc,” I growl as Charisma petty huffs.

“Excuse you! That was poetic brilliance right there!” they snap, their hands on their hips. “I’m underappreciated in this world.” They tisk.

“Speak. Fucking. English,” I say impatiently through my gritted teeth. Sullen growls as he sharply steps forward.

“You stitched each other, correct? Shared a needle? Shared the same thread?” I say nothing, but the tightening of my jaw gives him the confirmation. Sullen nods. “You’re feeling the doll, Boss. You’re experiencing what she is because you two are connected.” I stare at

my shirt-covered chest in shock before ripping the garment off and running my hand over the stitching.

"How do you know?" I whisper as Sullen shrugs.

"We may not be 'big kids'," he sneers while strolling back to Charisma. "But we make sure to stay knowledgeable in what makes others tick. Now tell me, what are you feeling?" I blink a couple of times, trying to get my bearings.

"Uh... scared? Maybe? Confused. I don't know. I-I feel trapped, like my skin is being pulled from my bones and attached to hooks or something! I smell burnt popcorn, and this god-awful music. It's loud and fast; it's making my heartbeat even faster."

"Burnt popcorn," Charisma muses. "Sounds like Havoc is settling in for a show. You know she likes the crispy kernels– or at least, that's what she always said."

"She always was a clown," Sullen drags out the words.

I'm feeling what Blue feels? Does that mean the pain—

"I need to get to Dreadmoor," I grab my shirt and put it back on before reaching for my Boogeyman outfit. "I need to save Blue. If we are connected, like you said, then there has to be a way for me to get back there, to get through the portal myself."

Sullen tilts his head from one side to the other in thought. "Possibly, but there's no guarantee."

"That's good enough for me." I rush from the room, bolting from the treehouse as I struggle to put my suit on, my legs moving quickly. I speed towards the direction of the portal to Dreadmoor, the smells and sounds of Blue's own senses choking me out as I struggle to focus and keep a level head.

I'm coming for you, Blue. I huff and pant, pushing through the ongoing pain and torture she must be enduring. *I'm coming, dollface.*

Charisma and Sullen shadow me, moving just as fast. Together, the three of us aim for the entrance of the portal. We reach our destination, quicker than ever before, the two minions completely unaffected as I breathe heavily, suddenly struggling to catch my breath. Something is wrong. I try to catch my breath, my heart racing as I couldn't properly inhale.

I can't breathe. I can't fucking breathe!

Panic grips my chest like a vice, squeezing until I can't even draw a breath. Blue must be enduring so much, having a full panic attack that I'm now experiencing. I slam my fists into a nearby tree, the wood splintering from the immense impact of my anger.

"Careful, boss," the demon whispers, eyeing me closely. "Save your strength. You're going to need it."

Every part of me is screaming, raging against the injustice of it all. Havoc took Blue back to Dreadmoor, back to the Spinster. A searing

inferno of rage engulfs every last inch of my being, threatening to consume me. I can feel it pulsing through my veins like molten lava, ready to erupt and destroy everything in its path.

I'm going to kill them; Havoc, The Spinster. I'm going to kill everyone in that fucking world. Every creation, every toy– I'm going to burn them all. I'm going to set fire to Dreadmoor and watch as it all fucking burns to ashes at my feet.

"Boss, you realize there is no certainty this will even work," Charisma says, their nervousness for my well-being almost touching as we stand in front of the portal. "As much as I'd love to see what you do with Havoc, you know we can't cross with you."

"I know, but Blue needs my help. I'm not leaving her. I have to try to get to Dreadmoor, regardless of the possible outcome. All I ask," I turn to face the two minions, their eyes full of concern, "if Havoc comes back through—"

"Yes, yes," Charisma dismisses me. "Sit on her—"

"You keep her locked away until I return. I'm going cut out that fucking button eye of hers and stuff it down her traitorous throat," I snarl, shoving my mask over my face. Sullen grins, excited by the idea of my descriptive punishment.

"Just make sure you come back," Sullen states as I walk toward the portal. "Nightmare can't be run with that old skeleton as king. There's a balance to this maddening world. It needs the Boogeyman."

I stare at them for another second before taking a breath and jumping into the brightly burning portal. Nightmare may need the Boogeyman, but Blue needed her Firefly.

I'm coming, dollface.

"FUCK!" I grunt out as my body is violently thrown out from the portal and onto the hard, unforgiving ground. The impact rattles my bones, my senses in overload as I strain, everything hurting from the crossover, leaving me feeling like I've been tossed around by one of the Nightmares that haunted my world. *Fuck, and I thought my first time through was rough*. As I lie there, gasping for breath, I feel the cold, smoky, acidic air filling my lungs and burning my throat. The triggering smells and sounds slowly seep into my being as I look around and realize where I am.

Dreadmoor. I've made it back.

Wasting no time, I push myself up from the ground, ignoring the cries of protest from my already-battered body. My eyes struggle to

adjust to the darkness, unlit by the ever-hanging moon light we have back in Nightmare. In Dreadmoor, the world is drenched in perpetual darkness unlike the night. It's as if the world has exploded, and been left in the cloudy aftermath of a heavy haze of smoke that plagues this land, never settling, making it nearly impossible to see beyond my outstretched hand. My pupils try to adjust, but I can only see so much.

"B-Blue!" I shout into the darkness, coughing as I slowly start walking, not knowing where exactly I'm headed. This world is unfamiliar to me now, given I've been exiled for centuries, leaving little pieces of memory and familiarities of the landscape behind. Blue could be anywhere. We could be separated by miles, and I wouldn't even know it.

Images from my dark dream flash through my mind, causing panic to rise within me. I saw this happening, felt it before, but I couldn't stop it. I couldn't protect her. The impact of something stabbing me in the side almost knocks me to my knees as I groan out in pain, squeezing my hands into fists, fighting through it. *Blue. She was suffering.* I force myself to stand back up, pushing past the shared pain and dark thoughts. Blue is still alive, and she needs my help. I need to find her. *Stay strong, dollface. I'm coming for you.*

The distant sound of music, much like what I heard back in Nightmare, carries on the soft breeze, swirling with the endless smoke around me. *The circus*. I cough, peering through the haze, my feet following the odd beat until I come to a desolate tree. I grab the low, lingering branches, a few snapping beneath my weight as I carefully climb higher, reaching just above the smoke. The sound grows, the music directing my focus as I spot a faint green light off in the distance, flashing from within the cloudy smoke. *Could that be it?*

The wind picks up, nearly knocking me over as I grip the dead branches and hold on tight, the smoke breezing by enough to reveal the top of a large, weathered, pin-striped circus tent. *There.*

Quickly, I jump from the tree, landing on my feet with a heavy thud. The smoke continues to fill my lungs, causing me to cough more and more. *God, I hate this place*. I want to rip my mask off, to stop sweating, to breathe the cold air, but I'm not sure if my tattoos will glow here. I can't take the risk. At least with my suit, I know I'm unrecognizable and able to sneak right in, blending amongst Dreadmoor's sick inhabitants.

I take a deep breath, trying my best to not gag on the smoke, before sprinting in the direction of the circus tent. Something tugs at my heart, as if pulling me closer with each step, telling me I'm going in the right direction. I follow the instinct, running until the music grows louder and the smoke begins to shift into an eerie green color, flashing lights flickering through the shadows. The same smell of

burnt popcorn fills my nostrils, choking me on its thick scent as I lean closer, hearing a recognizable cackle breaking through the music.

Havoc.

I move, sticking to the darkness as I lift the fabric entrance and move into the large tent, reaching deeper inside, unsure of what I'm about to find.

The tent is dark, the flashing green lights above offering me little sight ahead between their flickers as I step forward, ducking large wooden boards. A loud drum beat, the sound of numerous instruments playing alongside it as voices entangle with the circus tune, people cheering, as if a show is happening. I can't see much crawling beneath a strange structure, though the sounds and smells increase as I slither ahead. Light peaks from a slivered crack of one of the wooden boards, beckoning me. As I push closer, a familiar voice shrieks through a megaphone.

"Shut up so Havoc can speak!" It's Havoc. She's standing in the middle of a large circus ring, green, purple, and pink lights strobing overhead as numerous creations of all kinds—nightmares, demons and even lost souls—seem to have gathered, seated, cheering her on as if she is actually a fucking ringleader. She wears a sequin top hat, her clown makeup glowing the same as her neon green hair. She speaks into a large megaphone while swinging a large clown hammer.

"Havoc welcomes you to her circus of chaos, filled with dancing toys, trick nightmares, and even a sneaky little treat!" She cackles, nearly falling back as the crowd cheers, egging her on. "Sit back, eat your popped kernels, pop, pop, pop, and enjoy Havoc's Cirque de Mess!"

She's not a ringleader—she's a fucking loon.

The crowd cheers and roars, the lights swaying as they change colors. Havoc skips from the center of the ring, fading away as a group of toys enters the ring, their button eyes reflecting the bright yellow light above. The music switches tempo, the group beginning a dance as they carry on. I need to keep searching and find Blue.

I move from the sliver in the wooden base of the audience seating and continue climbing through the wooden structure, making my way around the underbelly of the circus.

A familiar smell hits my nostrils as I stop, focusing on it: Ghost Meringue. I know it's Havoc's scent, which means wherever that psychotic little clown is, Blue isn't far behind. But where did she go?

I close my eyes and listen, hoping to hear something that will help lead me in the right direction, but I only hear the music playing in the ring. *Fuck!*

The sound of the tempo changes, followed by the lights shifting and her shrieking voice returning through the megaphone causes me

to search for another crack and see what's happening. If Havoc's back, then Blue must be close by. My eyes frantically peer through the mask, desperately trying to find a way to see.

"Such fun toys!" she yells as cheers erupt from above, the sound of feet stomping against the wooden structure vibrating through my skull. "Who wants to see more of Havoc's circus?" The lights flash between purple, green, and pink, enticing the crown. I find a hole just a few feet away and rush to it, looking through as I see Havoc aiming her hammer high above at a newly-appeared tightrope. "Havoc has a special surprise for all of you!" she cackles again, twirling as the lights go dark. The crowds gasp and holler as new music begins to play.

A single purple light pierces through the darkness, fog gathering around the ring as a large nightmare crawls through. Not just any nightmare, but the Widow—the most dangerous nightmare of all, Havoc riding it. The enormous spider-like nightmare is dragging something behind it—*no*, someone. They're hard to see but obviously struggling. I need to get a better look.

"Havoc has a special surprise for all Havoc's friends!" She squeals.

I glance around noticing a small doorway, fog seeping in from behind, just ahead with fabric hanging in front of it. *There.* I move from the wooden wall and make my way to the opening as Havoc rambles on.

"You see, Havoc loves her toys. But Havoc found something special."

I pull the fabric aside, realizing that the doorway leads to a carved-out hallway, which seems to head right to the edge of the circus ring. I glance around before slithering to the wall, slowly creeping closer to the ring, the lights and sounds of the circus growing with each step. I peer up, noticing just how high the tent reaches and how large the circus really is.

"And today, I bring my circus. Drum roll!" She orders the band as they frantically begin playing a rapid beat on the drums while her spider hisses at them. As the drumroll ends, symbols crash together, and a beam of blue light turns on, revealing who's being dragged behind the spider.

Blue.

"Ta-da!" Havoc shouts as the onlookers cheer with excitement.

Blue's crying. Her face is battered, her legs tied together at the ankles, her shoes missing, her mouth bound and wrists tied together. Her dress and tights are ruined, her beautiful skin covered in bruises and wounds. My blood boils with rage, knowing all she's endured, seeing her dragged across the sandy floor of the circus ring like that.

I'm going to fucking murder you, Havoc!

"Now," Havoc plops down on the back of the spider, "who wants

to see the dolly fly?"

Fly?

As the crowd hoots and cheers the clown on, the music continues and I look up, realizing exactly who the tightrope is for. *Fuck.* Without a second thought, I bolt from the hall and into the circus, jumping over the edge of the circus ring, aiming for Blue.

"No!" I scream, catching everyone's attention.

Havoc and her spider whip around, spying on me as her sharp grin grows. "Boss!" she shrieks as if happy to see me. "Welcome to the show!"

I try to run to Blue, who rotates to look at me, screaming against her gag, crying hysterically. But Havoc's spider cuts me off, hissing as I stop in my tracks.

"Let her go, Havoc!" I yell, panting as I stare back at Blue, my heart aching at her pain.

I'm so sorry, Blue. I'm going to get you out of here, I promise.

The crowd boos, throwing popcorn and trash at me as I try to bat it away.

"Dolly is Havoc's plaything. And Havoc doesn't share toys!" she growls, aiming her hammer at me.

"She's not a toy!" I growl back.

"Oh, then what is dolly?" Havoc grins. "Maybe boss should ask spider lady and see what she has to say."

Spider lady?

Havoc raises her hammer, screeching into the megaphone. "Time to make dolly fly!"

As soon her words leave her mouth, Blue's body rises to the tiptoes of her feet as if something else is controlling her. I stand frozen, unable to pass the giant spider, watching helplessly as I realize why I feel the pain I've been feeling. Blue isn't moving on her own—she's being manipulated by strings. Her limbs and skin are sewn to thick, long threads pulling her around like a puppet.

"Blue!" I shout out, powerless to do anything.

Blue groans and cries into the gag as she begins to rise into the air, her skin bleeding from the sewn knots as she continues to be lifted higher and higher, until she reaches the tightrope, where another creation is waiting. They grab her waist, pulling her to a small platform, as if waiting for orders.

Havoc raises the megaphone to her mouth. "Spider lady!" I follow her gaze, my stomach dropping as my eyes land on her. *The Spinster.* "Boss thinks dolly here," she points her hammer at Blue, "isn't a toy!"

The Spinster grins, her buttons shimmering with excitement as she glares down at me, her needle-like fingers curling over the arms of her chair as she watches from the center of the audience in a grand, gothic

theater box.

You.

"Welcome home," she whispers to me, the trauma I have carried from her, boiling over the surface as I step back, shock and fear filling me. "It's been far too long. Tell me," she leans forward as my blood runs cold, "do you enjoy *playing* with my toys because they remind you of me?" She taps her button eye, chuckling to herself. "Remind you of us?"

I can't speak. I feel powerless and weak, drowning in the overwhelming dread of coming face-to-face with my abuser after all this time. I never thought I'd actually see her again, yet here she is, in front of me.

"What's wrong? Cat got your tongue, *Boogeyman*?" She points her sharp finger at me as the crowd erupts into laughter. "Havoc!" She snaps her head around to look at the Spinster. "Enough with the doll. I think it's time you read our audience a little bedtime story."

Havoc giggles, jumping from the spider as it hisses at me, running in my direction with her hammer.

"Havoc. Don't. Pl—" Her hammer collides against my skull causing me to fall to the ground, dust and fog surrounding me as the crowd cheers, and darkness seeps into my mind.

"Night night bug!"

Everything quickly falls into absolute blackness. The only thing I can comprehend is the whispered voice of Blue calling my name, as if she's been hiding away in my consciousness.

Firefly.

"FUCK!" Cold water jolts my consciousness back to life as I inhale sharply, breathing in the thick scent and sounds of the circus. My body aches like before, but with a stronger intensity. I try to grasp what's happening, my vision still clearing as I shake my head and realize my suit is gone and I'm now shirtless, my flesh sewn in large knots that stretch high into the air, but I can't see where they lead due to the lack of light.

"F-Firefly."

My head snaps in the direction of her sweet, weak voice, searching the darkness for her.

"Blue?" As I call out her name, something rams into my chest, almost knocking me forward as the sewn knots pull and tug on my skin.

“Hush and shush!” Havoc snarls, mounting her giant spider. “The show must go on!” She rides the shadowy nightmare away to the center of the dark circus ring as a single purple spotlight shines down on her, her hat sparkling in the light as she grins, raising that ridiculous megaphone to her mouth.

“Once upon a time, there was a big, bad bug!” Another single light shoots to life, spotlighting me in a vibrant neon green. My eyes burn from the brightness, straining to look around for Blue.

“A naughty bug, who broke spider lady’s rules and ran away!” The crowd boos as a white spotlight aims at the Spinster, accentuating her grin as it branches further than I’ve ever seen, eating up my pain.

“Shut up!” Havoc yells, her spider crawling across the ring as the unruly crowd slowly goes silent.

“Blue,” I whisper into the darkness. “Baby,” I strain, “where are you?”

A blue spotlight flicks on, highlighting Blue perfectly. I gasp as I stare, her mangled body held up by the same tied knots and thread, blood dripping down from them as she barely manages to stay standing, her mouth uncovered though ripped and stained, as if it has been stitched and reopened in some sick torture.

“Blue...” I yank against my threads, feeling something resist and pull me back. I glare up, my eyes following the strings into the lights above as I notice they connect to a pulley system at the peak of the tent and loop down to the back of the Spinster’s chair, attaching to her long fingers. She’s controlling the strings—controlling us. *Fucking cunt*. I try to pull my arm, watching as it lifts her finger lightly. She sits it back down, snapping my arm back the way she wants.

“One day, a sweet but innocent little dolly found this big bad bug and tried to be friends,” Havoc croaks, cackling to herself. “But what dolly didn’t know was that bug here,” she aims her hammer in my direction as the Spinster tugs the thread, yanking me forward, “was playing his own games.”

Oh God... No.

I try to look back at Blue, the Spinster moving her up on her feet as she groans, clenching her teeth while tears spill down her dirty face.

“Game?” Blue wheezes. “W-what game?” she whispers, her poor voice so weak and scared. She winces as her threads continue to be pulled. “Firefly.” Her breathing is shallow and I can feel her in myself. Her fear, her pain, the rapid increase of her heart—I feel it all, and it only worsens my own emotions.

“Don’t listen to her, Blue,” I call out. “Just look at me.” Her eyes raise as she stares at me, broken and exhausted. “Keep your eyes on me, baby. That’s my girl. You’re doing a great job. Don’t give up. You keep fighting, Blue. I’m going to get us out of here. I promise.”

“Yes, big ol’ boss bug had his own twist in the game.” Havoc chuckles.

“Shut up, Havoc!” I yell, my throat burning from the aggression in my voice.

Her spider scurries to me, hissing as she leans over and whispers down to me. “Webs and lies, tangled together, creating such a messy mess. Havoc warned boss dolly was glass. Now, bug must watch his toy shatter!” She leans back, raising the megaphone to her mouth.

“Don’t do this,” I grit, fighting the threads, begging Havoc to stop. She merely grins, facing back to the large crowd.

“Bug saw dolly as a key. A key to win his game.” I pull at my arms, trying to rip the threads from my flesh, but it’s no use.

“Stop!” I growl, glancing back to see Blue’s pained face.

“Roll the dice, decide the doll’s fate. Snake eyes! Bug said dolly was the perfect pawn. His key to winning spider lady’s game! He only needed to trick the dolly into loving him.” She makes kissing sounds as I try to move to Blue. “And then he could finally win!”

Blue’s eyes meet mine, the feel of her heart shattering in my own chest as I try to move to her, resisting the pull of the Spinster’s threads. “Blue,” I groan, my blood trailing down my skin. “Blue, listen to me.”

“Y-you were using me?” she chokes out, her voice raw and bitter.

“No,” I breathe, feeling my own betrayal. “Please, I—”

“Bug played his little game and won dolly’s heart!” The crowd murmurs, shocked by the truth. “And now, here they are! All is lost! Spider lady wins! Havoc lives happily ever after!” The crowd cheers as Havoc stands, bowing from the back of her giant spider.

“I-I thought you loved me, Firefly.” Her words pierce my fucking heart.

“Spider lady!” Havoc shoots through the overbearingly loud noises. “Make them dance to celebrate your win!”

The Spinster snarls as she flicks her fingers.

“Dance!” Havoc shouts, the crowd following suit as they chant as one, demanding a dance.

“Blue, I—” My body screams in pain as it lunges toward her, crashing into hers before we both are raised up, our strings pulling us together.

Havoc squeals and shrieks, clapping her hands as music plays and a cannon shoots overhead, confetti raining down on all of us. “Victory!” she shouts.

Against our will, Blue and I begin to dance, stumbling and groaning through the excruciating pain, controlled like puppets by our own creator.

“Blue.” I try to talk to her, but she refuses to even look at me.

“Please!”

“I trusted you!” she cries out as I’m forced to dip her, her mouth gaping open as she wails in pain. “It hurts,” she sobs, leaning back into my arms.

“Fuck, I’m so sorry!” I croak, trying to comfort her, but every time I lean too close, I’m tipped away. “I promise, I do love you, Blue. My feelings—they’re real. Please, let me explain everything.”

“No!” she snaps, twirling away, the two of us forcefully bowing to the Spinster in defeat as the music fades.

The crowd cheers, applauding Havoc and her psycho circus, bowing to the Spinster as she stands, tall and slender like a needle herself. “Havoc,” she coos. “Take them away. Keep them close but separated. I have things to attend to.” She waves us off, the strings losing all power over us as we crash forward onto the ground.

“Blue,” I cough, crawling to her, reaching my hand out. “Please.”

“Don’t touch me!” she cries out, jolting her hand back.

My heart aches, cracking at the pain in her voice. I watch helplessly as creations run to us, dragging our bodies further and further away from one another.

This is all my fault. I ruined everything.

I PULL the last knot from my skin and hurl it across the cramped cell, unable to hold back the hot tears that sting my eyes. The look of heartbreak and betrayal on Blue's face cut me deeply, the feeling of her torment hanging in my own heart. She'll never forgive me, and who could blame her? I never disclosed my true motives, never told her the truth: that I was using her as a pawn in my own twisted game. But my feelings for her were real. I've tried to hide them, deny them, but I've never lied about them to her. I loved her, and that was real.

But she won't believe that now. Not after what she's seen, what Havoc said.

"Fuck," I whisper, sinking to the floor and burying my head, in my hands. "Blue,” I whisper into the dark, damp cell. “Baby, I'm so sorry."

"Is that you?" Her voice echoes in my head, and I can feel myself losing my grip on reality. *Am I going mad?*

"Blue?" I call out into the empty room.

"Yes, *Boogeyman*." Her words steal the breath from my lungs, and I can feel a sob rising in my throat at the sound of her icy voice and the use of that name. She has never called me the Boogeyman. “I’m in the cell behind yours. Another sick game by our creator, no doubt. Just—

leave me alone."

"Blue," I choke out, desperately searching for the right words. "Please... Please don't do this."

"You used me," she spits, and I can feel the pain in her words mirroring my own.

"No!" I shout, feeling desperation coursing through me as I tug at the chains. "I mean, yes, that was the initial plan but, Blue, you know me. You know my past—the things I've told you—"

"It's pointless," she interrupts with a bitter laugh. "I should've known better than to trust the notorious Boogeyman. How foolish can I be? To think that anyone could love a pile of scraps like me."

"Stop it!" My voice breaks as I cry out, hoping she can hear the desperate plea in my tone. "Stop. You are not scraps! You are everything to me, Blue. For the first time ever in my existence, you made me feel like maybe, *maybe*, I could be more than just a monster. That I was worthy of being loved. You don't just see my mask—you see me, the *real* me. You own my heart, and I need you to understand that. dollface, I should have told you before, but the timing was never right, and honestly, I hoped—"

"Hoped what?" Her voice is full of anger and pain, and I can almost feel her slipping further away from me. "That I would just get over it? That I'm so desperate for your love, your attention, that I would ignore the flames burning me as I continue toward your light until it consumes me whole? Fuck you."

She spits out the words with venom, and all I can think about is finding her, touching her, making her believe that my love for her is real. Because without her, I will succumb to the darkness. She needs to understand; I'm but a mere glow in comparison to her radiant and brilliant beacon of light. My dim flicker pales in comparison to the warmth and brightness she emits, guiding and illuminating all those around her. I needed her to save me from myself.

"Dollface," I breathe. "Baby, where are you? Can you hit something so I can find you behind the wall?" Even if all I can do is sit beside her, I will make it enough.

"I would, but I don't see your face anywhere, and I'm saving up my energy to hit that." I snort. I love her so much, and I hate that she's so angry with me.

"I love you," I try weakly, but all I get in return is silence, and it's gut wrenching.

"Did you know?" she asks softly and I shiver at the feeling running over my thigh. Is... is that her touching my name, sewn into her leg?

"Know what?" I manage out as an almost growl rumbles in my chest at the aching burn I feel over my thigh. It's as if she's here , touching me herself, the sensation sending shockwaves to my cock.

“That the stitching would connect us?” she asks softly. “That you’d be able to travel here with it. Is that why you did it?”

“No!” I grunt out, hitting my head on the wall. “Blue, I had... fuck, what are you doing?” I pant as I feel my abdomen tightening. I feel *her* inserting my cock inside her, even though she’s not here. She’s not here, and I’m not touching myself, yet I feel as though I’m inside her and she’s wrapped around me. *Oh, fuck.*

“Seems like if I touch myself,” she whimpers softly, “you feel it. Interesting.”

“Blue,” I whimper at the sudden relief. She must’ve stopped, because I feel nothing but longing now. “Blue, baby, please—”

“Did. You. Know?”

“I swear, I didn’t know. Sullen and Charisma only told me earlier, because I could smell the burnt popcorn and hear... Fuckkkk...” The sensation returns, “H-hear music.” I don’t want her to stop. “There, right fucking there—fucking damnit!” I shout when she stops again. “What do you want? You want me to beg? You know I will. I will fucking lick the ground clean before you, Blue. Just tell me, what is it you want me to do?”

“You hurt me.” She states simply as I feel the pleasure slowly, so fucking slowly, starting to build again.

“I’m so sorry,” I rasp, my thighs literally shaking. “You have no idea how sorry I am, baby.”

“You don’t deserve a release.” She continues to tease me somehow, as if she’s right here in my lap. This connection between us is so intense, so unbearably taunting.

“You’re right.” Licking my lips, I stare up at the ceiling, filled with self-hate. “I-I don’t. I don’t deserve pleasure, a release. I don’t deserve you.”

“You said you loved me,” she struggles to say the words.

“I do. God, Blue. you have no idea how deep my love for you runs. You are in every fiber of my being.” I moan loudly as the pressure continues to build, the coil tightening at the base of my spine, ready to snap.

“You’re right.” Her voice is barely audible over my labored breaths. “I don’t, and I don’t know if I’d believe you if you told me.” She whimpers in pleasure, and fuck, I’m about to come– she’s about to come. I want to pour my heart and soul out and prove my love to her, but right now, I’m about to explode.

“I love you,” I pant, my body vibrating. “I love you, Blue. Fuck, I love you.” It’s all I can get out.

“I love you too,” she whimpers before releasing a cry. I follow her over the edge, my body coming alive as the most intense orgasm of my life washes over me. I feel myself coming, despite not even

touching my dick. It's almost too much, too intense. My own elation is drenched in hers, the two intertwined together. I look around as the cell seems to come alive with colors, as if we were in my basement, surrounded by my bugs. *Is this what she sees when she orgasms?*

Every nerve in my body is pulsating, with charge and all I want to do is hold her. Once we come down and the color returns to normal, I reach up and touch my chest where her name is stitched.

"Don't," she whispers harshly. "Don't touch me."

"Blue—"

"Rule number one." She chokes on a sob. "Things may be a bit painful. If it becomes too much, tell you to stop." I feel every ounce of her pain and emotions, engulfing my own. My heart is never going to recover from this.

"Baby," I plead, tears falling freely. "That... I didn't mean... The pain—" *What am I supposed to say? What am I supposed to do?*

"Trust me, the pain I feel right now," she sniffles as her words shadow my heart. "It's the worst pain I've ever endured. So please, just stop." My trembling hand falls from my chest, landing on my lap. Resting my head back against the wall, I close my eyes as I try to think of how I'm not only going to get us out of this, but I'm going to make Blue realize that my feelings for her are absolutely genuine. I need her to know, to forgive me. I can't fucking live without her.

Chapter 12

Havoc

Dolly and boss are separated by bars and stone, chained away from the other, lost in the sneaky shadows. *Lonely, naughty little pawns*. Dolly sniffles so much while bug's breathing gets heavier and heavier. *Huff and puff*. I raise my hand holding the large circus hammer as it smashes against the bars.

"Wakey, wakey, toys!" I cackle, happy by the vibrating sounds, smashing again and again. "Cock-a-doodle-doo!"

Dolly shrinks at the sight of me, moving away as I dance outside the bars. Dolly seems scared. Scared of Havoc? Silly dolly. It's the game, dolly. Dolly likes games. Why be so scared? Does dolly taste like fear? Hmmm... maybe one lick? *No! Spider lady said no licks or bites. Behave, Havoc.*

"Leave her alone, Havoc," bug barks like a wolf. Foolish to assume Havoc won't squash him like the bug he is, as I have a giant hammer.

My head snaps toward the glowing bug, and I blink. *Fascinating*. "Boss is sad. Why such a sad bug?" I grab the corners of my mouth and pull them down into a sad face. "I thought boss liked games."

"No more games," Dolly wheezes out through a sob. "Please."

"Oh?" I dance to the other side of the prison and leap onto the bar of the cell. "Dolly winds up and speaks! If Havoc pulls her string, what will she say next?"

"Havoc," Bug growls. "Leave her the fuck alone!"

"Bug is boss no more," I hiss like a snake. "Havoc has no leash. Speaks to whoever Havoc wants."

"No leash?" He huffs out a laugh, his chains clinking as he moves. *Clink-clank*. "You think the Spinster doesn't have you threaded to one of her needles, using you like everyone else?" His chuckle is low as his head shakes. "Foolish girl."

Words make me angry as I feel fire in my face. "Bug and dolly are locked up, but Havoc is free like the wind. See?" I twirl. "Free."

"Open your fucking eyes, Havoc! You're not free. You're just as much a prisoner as we are! Your prison may look different than ours, but you forget that Blue and I have both been in your position. We know precisely how far those chains go. We both got out of here, thinking we were free in Nightmare, yet look at us." He shakes his arms, his chains singing to me. "Let's see how far you can reach with

yours."

"No!" my bad voice growls, teeth biting his air.

Bug stands, dragging his chains as he speaks through the bars in such an angry voice. "Then why are you here? Why did you kidnap Blue? Why do *her* bidding if you're so free? You're not free. You're a pawn like the rest of us, a player in this fucking endless game that no one wins."

I slam the hammer into the bars as he stumbles back on jelly feet. "Havoc serves Havoc, not a player or pawn. Havoc does not play the game but watches very closely." *Eyes see all.*

"If you're just watching." Dolly stands, sad tears leaking from her face. "Then why kidnap me? Why help the Creator?"

"Why not?" I shake my head, skipping to the other side of the wall. "Havoc helps whoever Havoc wants."

"If Havoc helps anyone, then why pretend to be my friend, or his, if you were going to just betray us? Who's side are you on?" Pretty dolly knows nothing.

"Havoc already said!" Stamping my foot, I huff. Stupid dolly, not listening to words! "Havoc watches." I pull up my lid, pointing to my wet eyeball. "Sees all the players, all the mistakes. So many mistakes."

"The only mistake any of us made was trusting you, you psychotic fucking clown." Bug is angry. Should be red but green with it. Green from vile, mean words.

I sit down, facing the two puppets, my face sad. How to make them see what Havoc sees? "Do bug or dolly ever see a thing and want to touch it? To poke at its guts and see what happens?" I tilt my head, waiting as they say no words. Strange; Havoc feels she's being very clear.

"Havoc likes to poke at the game—see what happens. Like shoving buzzing bees in a jar and shaking it up real fast!" I move my hands up and down, smiling. "Havoc likes to see what happens! Chaos!" I jump to my feet, twirling the hammer in my hands.

"That's not chaos. That's insanity." Bug sits down, looking like an ugly, sad puppy.

"I trusted you, Havoc." Dolly sniffles again. Must be allergic to the dirty room. "I thought you were my friend," she sputters as she chokes on sad tears.

I slither to her, peeking through the bars as I smile big, showing my sharp teeth. "That was dolly's mistake." I bite, chomping the air as she gasps, startled at my laughter. "Green and blue," I sing, swirling away from her. "Soon, you'll both be red and dead!"

"Havoc—Havoc, wait!" Dolly tries to distract me, but I know better. "Don't leave us here!"

"Tick-tock!"

The Creator

His dice rolls in my hand, the edges still sharp. After all these years, he still holds such fondness for them, clinging to the memory of a lonely boy who tried to befriend him. *Fool.* A grunt escapes my mouth as I chuck the red dice across the ground, watching as they roll to an eight.

"Spider lady!" The insipid clown minion of his barges into the room, twirling a neon-painted circus hammer in her hands, smiling as her razor-sharp teeth reflect the nearby light. I can't help but roll my eyes at her vexing, shrieking voice. She's insufferable, a loose cannon in every sense of the word, but a useful tool nevertheless.

"Yes, Havoc?" Her name is quite fitting. "Any news?"

"Zip!" She slams her hammer down, the loud noise grating on me, before sitting on the face of it like a chair. "Bug is still glowing with sadness. Dolly blue as always." She kicks her platform shoes, shaking her head.

"Excellent. Let them suffer in their dingy cells, withering away as they listen to the other's screams, helpless, slowly succumbing to madness and starvation. It will be a fitting punishment, don't you think?" I sneer, my eyes blazing with savage satisfaction as I stare into the flickering flames of my fireplace.

She tilts her head, staring at me as if frozen in her eerie position. I'm always left to wonder what goes on behind her eyes, in that colorful little brain of hers. Havoc plays them both, despite her apparent deep fondness of the two. She offered her eye for me to spy with yet has defended her *boss* in battles she nearly didn't make it out of. She doesn't seek power or retribution; instead she simply wants to raise the stakes of my game, adding new twists and turns. It's impressive, really, watching her play them all. Entertaining, yet slightly unnerving. How does one grow so close and yet is still able to flip so quickly?

She blinks. "Is spider lady bored now that the game is over?"

I flinch at her words. *Bored? How dare she.*

"Of course not!" I grip the arms of my elaborate chair, my needle-like fingers digging into the wood, releasing a satisfying crack as I lean forward. "I have won my game after all these centuries, with the added bonus of watching your *bug's* heart shatter in the process." I grin, revealing my own sharp teeth. "It's something I have waited to

taste for far too long." I lean back, my smile fading away. With the game ended, now what?

"He wouldn't love me, yet he chose to fall for a toy, and not even a proper one. Blue isn't even complete, made from scraps. It's such an insult."

"Spider lady seems sad."

"I am not sad!" I snap at the imbecile. "I am angry. He should've accepted the truth of his creation, taken his seat at my side, and spent eternity as my king here in Dreadmoor. Instead, he chose to disobey me, choosing to side with those wretched children, casting himself into that dreadful world they call Nightmare, planning all the ways he could kill me—his creator. My own creation, made in my image, has plotted my death for centuries." I release a short, cold laugh. "It's rather exhausting, really. It seems we were destined to never be. If I cannot have him as my own, then I shall break them both. Let's see just how strong those traitorous toys are when they rot away, listening as the other dies a slow, painful death, unable to help. Always just out of reach." *A poetic end to it all.*

The clown presses her lips together in a thin, firm line. "But with bug dead, the game is over."

"Precisely," I growl under my breath. "I have won."

Havoc hops from the hammer, pacing back and forth, as if contemplating something. I pick at my fingers, exhaling as I wait for whatever nonsense she's about to spill. I wonder if I pluck her button out and send her back to Nightmare if she would stay there. I have what I need. I have won the game, and I do not need her anymore.

"Havoc has it!" She snaps her fingers. "What if spider lady gives bug one last chance—"

I can't help but scoff. "I am in no mood to see him ever again, clown."

"Havoc wasn't finished!" She stomps her foot, reminding me of the bratty children I've lured in over the centuries. Such a temper.

The tiny terror doesn't threaten me, but I'm intrigued by her odd passion, morbidly curious as to what she may suggest. I won't admit it out loud, but she is correct about one thing; the game is over, and soon, I will grow bored. My greatest opponent, the man I created to love, has been had, leaving me with no challenge or threat to oppose. This feeling is something I'd prefer not to experience.

"Go on. I'm listening."

"What if spider lady," she crawls around, retrieving her boss's set of dice, "gives bug one last chance?" She crawls to me, offering the dice up as her head cocks to the side. "Let him roll his fate for old time's sake."

I stare at the red dice, tapping them with the pointed tip of my

fingernail. “If I did allow such a thing,” I drawl, “what would be the stakes?”

“Odds, boss wins. He and dolly live happily ever after. Forever.”

“I don’t think so—”

“Boss rolls even,” her face darkens with her voice, “then boss must do what needs be done. And spider lady wins a bloody game and her toy.” *What needs to be done, hmm? Intriguing.*

“Interesting proposal, Havoc, but the chances of me losing are just as high as him winning. I do not like it.” I push her open hand away. *Too high a risk, I refuse to lose him again.*

“Don’t you see?” she shrieks, shooting to the edge of my seat, standing close. “Boss always wins the rolls. The only way to be together forever,” she leans even closer, her mouth moving next to my ear as she whispers, “is death.”

I see. If he wins, they both die. If I win, then the doll dies. There is no loss on my part; it’s simply a trick of words, meant to confuse—something my little creation would so easily catch on to if he wasn’t being led by his dick.

“If he thinks there’s a way to save that wretched toy, he’ll take it.” The clown nods quickly, eager and excited by me entertaining her idea. “It would make the shortly ended game a bit more interesting—for the time being.”

She giggles, unable to sit still with giddiness, her mood bleeding to my own.

“Alright, then.” I smirk, and the clown squeals with excitement. “Bring them to me, Havoc. We shall have one last game after all.”

Havoc raises her hammer up in the air in excitement as I walk from the fire towards my window, looking out over my land. I cross my arms over my front as a familiar ache fills me, an ache I have spent an entire existence trying to ignore.

No one could ever understand the emptiness I feel, knowing I am a god, a creator of beings and words, yet I have no one by my side. I thought he—well, I thought things would be different. I should’ve known better, but call it desperation on my part. I thought he would see it my way. When I created him, it was for a companion, but—I may be a god, but I am still a woman. The way I designed him, his eyes, that crooked little smile... He stirred things in me. I wanted him—needed him.

His rejection broke me in a way I didn’t realize I could break. I became mad in every sense of the word. I figured he was broken; somehow, I must’ve made a mistake, he was incapable of love. But here I stand, with his *love* in the cell below me as they find their pleasure through *my* threads. I created them both, and yet he chose her? He chose a pile of scraps I threw together just to get out of my

way.

The windowpane cracks as a bolt of lightning shoots across the sky, igniting an idea. “Havoc,” I snip out, not looking away from the storm. My cold hand reaches my chain necklace, playing with the large stitch remover dangling between my breasts. “Bring me the toy first.” A smirk pulls at my lips. “There are a few *alterations* I would like to make, ensuring she looks her best for her Boogeyman.”

Chapter 13

Firefly

"Where is she!" I roar as Havoc strolls into my cell, her amused grin bright and wide.

"Come now bug, the game is just starting."

"What game?" I growl, fighting the chains.

She leans toward me as I lunge towards her, but she moves away too quickly, taunting me. "Silly bug, knows Havoc doesn't like touches. Tsk tsk. Now come, the game will start. Behave or dolly will suffer." She raises a key, grinning as she slowly approaches me. "Be a good bug." She unlocks and removes my chains as I fight back every fiber of my being to strangle her, but Havoc knows I won't do anything until I see Blue and know she's alright. So why set me free?

Something was happening but I don't know what. Havoc came in hours ago, creations rushing after her, dragging Blue from her cell. They said nothing, simply obeying some orders and left as Havoc simply watched, whistling the entire time. I have no idea where they took her but the searing pain I felt in my eye terrifies me.

"Fuck your game! Where is Blue?" Havoc stops retreating and spins to look at me.

"Dolly is the final piece. The game can now be won. Come on!" She urges. What game? Dread fills me at what I'm about to walk into. What have Havoc and the Spinster done to Blue?

I follow Havoc from the cell and all the way to the study, trying not to shiver as I see the Spinster sitting by the fire. My eyes widen as I watch her. She's absently stroking... yellow hair?

"B-blue!" I cry out as I see my sweet girl. She's bound and beaten, her head forced on the Spinster's lap as the bitch continues to stroke her hair like she's some sort of pet. Blue lets out weak cries and I see the cause behind the mysterious pain.

"What did you do!" I roar to mask my cry. Her eyes—she's missing her black eye.

"No need to shout," the Spinster hisses while lazily picking up a glass jar and shaking the content. Blue's black button eye clings around and it's enough to make me want to vomit.

"Don't you like it when their eyes are in jars? On display to see you?" She grins sharply.

“Blue, baby it’s okay,” I don’t know if I’m saying this for my benefit or hers at this point. “I-I can fix this alright. You know I can.” I want to fall to my knees at the sight of her, my heart cracking from it all.

“Dolly saw too much,” Havoc beams while skipping over to the other chair. “Dolly was warned about the colors. Drawn to—”

“You took her fucking eye!” I scream as I grip Havoc by her shirt, bearing down on her with such rage. “I’m going to kill you.” Havoc’s grin drops and her human eye dilates. She grips my throat, pulling my hand from her, her own strength surprising me.

“Havoc,” the Spinster states coolly. “Enough.”

Havoc releases me as I raise a brow, “No leash huh?” I taunt, causing her to snarl at me.

The Spinster removes Blue from her lap as she stands up. Blue falls to the ground and I try to rush to her, but Havoc blocks me.

“Bug is here to play with spider lady, not dolly.”

“Fuck you both,” I spit out, causing the Spinster to chuckle softly.

“You always were one for the colorful vocabulary. It’s always been the thing I’ve found least attractive about you.”

“Oh, well excuse the fuck out of me.” My voice is barely able to stay strong. All I can see is her, slipping into my bed, pinning me down and forcing herself on top of me. As if reading my mind, the Spinster reveals her cruel smile while striding closer to me. She stops in front of me, her button eyes looking me up and down.

“You know I could see you,” her split tongue runs over her teeth. “Every time. Every thrust, every pant, every release that you put on in front of my buttons, I saw them all. So you can play the victim all you want *Boogeyman*, but I watched you relieve yourself to my thoughts. I’ve watched you as you *fucked* my creations. You say I repulse you, that you could never love me, and yet,” she motions to Blue who is weakly trying to stand. “You seem to have a fascination for the things I create.”

“Blue might’ve come from your hands,” I snarl, getting into her face. “But she is *everything* you’re not. She’s smart, kind, caring, beautiful—plus I actually like fucking her.”

“Ha!” She laughs while shoving me back into Havoc’s iron-like grip. “This,” she grips Blue by her hair. “This is what you call beautiful? A pile of scraps? She was meant to be shipped out to a second hand store with the humans. She was trash I needed to get rid of as I couldn’t even rely on her to be a toy! She has failed every task given to her, including getting killed by you in Nightmare!” She toys with Blue’s loose hair as she struggled to free herself. “I shouldn’t be surprised though, of course my two biggest failures would find comfort in each other. I guess you could say, you two have mommy

issues."

"Fuck you," Blue wheezes as she grabs the Spinster's wrist and drags her nails down it. The Spinster hisses in pain and shoves Blue off, before yanking free the chain that was hanging from around her neck and between her breasts. The Spinster forcefully lifts and shoves Blue onto the table as I fight against Havoc's hold, trying to help her.

"I'm going to kill you Havoc, do you understand me!" I bark as Havoc laughs, enjoying this way too much.

"Hush bug! Watch the show!" She cheers. The Spinster grips something at the end of her chain, palming what appears to be a silver stitch remover.

No.

"Where is it," the Spinster hums, her button eyes roaming over Blue. "Where is the thread that binds you two, hmm?" Her needle-like fingers search Blue's body as she kicks , the Spinster pins her leg down. "Ahhh..." She smirks as she lifts the tattered hem of Blue's dress, revealing my name. "You always were a leg man." Her sinister grin grows, a soft laugh escaping her dead lips before placing her tool over my stitch and cutting the F of my name.

"No!" I scream as Blue sobs, thrashing around, a sudden pain in my own thigh.

She continues to slide the sharp edge of the tool under the thread, snipping the letters as Blue and I both cry out in pain.

"Please! Stop, Spin—Creator!" I pant out, causing her to stop her movements before she can finish. She pulls her remover from Blue's leg and walks over to me.

"Ohhhh... ." She purrs as her tongue runs over my jaw causing bile to run up my throat. "I bet that one stung didn't it?" Stepping back she considers me before reaching in her pocket. My eyes fall to the red dice in her hand. My dice.

"Shall we play a game?" She whispers, leaning in real close.

"No," I breathe out, startling us both.

"No?" She laughs in shock. "Since when do you not want to play a game?"

"If it involves Blue, I'm not playing." I grit out. She laughs and shakes her head.

"Hmmm… interesting, very well." She releases a sigh as she drops the dice on the ground, causing them to roll toward my feet. "Havoc, he doesn't want to play so I guess, I win and we kill them both."

"Wait, what? Stop! No!" I grip Havoc by the neck and flip her over me, her body moving in such a way it dislocates my shoulder in the process. "God damn cocksucker!" I grind while glaring at the Spinster.

"Stop. Not her." I beg.

"Hmmm... yes, her. In fact, I'm going to kill her first, in front of

you." She turns to grab Blue, but I grab the dice and run to the Spinster.

"Okay! Okay! I'm here, okay. See?" I look at Blue, holding my dice, hoping she can feel how sorry I am, how much I love her. "Okay, I'll play." Havoc cheers as the Spinster smiles.

"Havoc told you bug would play." I swallow my growl as the Spinster watches me.

"Odd, you win and the two of you can be together forever," the Spinster smirks. "Even, I win and you're both dead. And snake eyes," her buttons flicker as her black brow raises. "You roll snake eyes and you belong to me, forever. You are mine, and *she* is banished to the Nightmare to be hunted for eternity just as you were."

"Firefly," Blue whispers my name and I want to cry. Taking a breath, I hold my hand out, desperate to save her.

"Deal." I state. The Spinster takes my hand in hers and we're locked—neither able to break the hold until the dice roll our fate. "But know this," I growl, "No matter the outcome of this game, I will *never* love you."

I throw the dice and listen as the sharp corners hit the ground and I pray, for the first time in forever, not for an odd or even. No, I want snake eyes. She may think I'm stupid, but I see right through her tainted words. It's the only option that the words can't be misconstrued; Blue lives if I roll snake eyes. I'll never see her again, but she lives and that's all I want.

"Eight!" Havoc squeals and my heart sinks. The Spinster cocks her head to one side as her smile is one of fondness.

No.

"What a shame. I'll miss our games," she whispers, running her free hand along the side of my cheek. "But all good things must come to an end."

"Bug loses!!!! Dolly will be in all the pieces!"

I stare at the Spinster as I reach my hand up to her face. The unfamiliar physical contact shocks her as I release my hand from hers and place it on the other side, holding her within my grasp. "I will too, but fair is fair," I croak out as I pull her to my mouth, her hard lips pressing against mine. "You made a mistake," I whisper into her mouth.

"What?" She gasped softly, yearning for more of me.

"You should've killed me when I first ran away."

The second I feel her relax I rip the chain from her neck, and in one fluid motion, I ram the stitch remover fiercely through her throat. Her garbled gasps are a fucking symphony as I stare into her pitch black button eyes, smiling as I rip my hand out. She falls to her knees, her black blood pouring from the wound, staining her alabaster skin. I

grab her inky hair, her arms flailing about trying to escape me as I rip out one of her button eyes, tossing it across the floor. Havoc begins to shriek and cry out in despair, clawing at her head.

"An eye for an eye," I groaned. "No one touches my girl."

She cries out, screaming and croaking. "Cheater!"

I lean down to look in her remaining eye. "I'm the Boogeyman, I don't play fair." I rip her other eye out, ignoring Havoc's screams as the Spinster falls to the floor, her hands wrapping around my feet as she begs for her life.

"I made you," she sobs. "You can't do this to me!"

"Watch me," I raise my foot over her head. "Oh wait," I look down at her eyeless face. "You can't." My foot slams into her skull, the bone crunching beneath my boot as I stomp her life away, unleashing centuries of anger and trauma, snuffing it all out within seconds. My chest heaves as I compose myself and try to control my breathing and I make my way to Blue. I have to get her out of here. The Spinster is dead but that still leaves us with another opponent.

Havoc and her fucking Nightmare.

Chapter 14

Blue

My creator had fallen, dead at my feet,
Slain by his hand in our own defeat.

I stand still, shocked and confused. How can I move? What did he do? Oh my God, he really did it. He killed her. Our creator.

"Cheater!" Havoc's shrill shriek echoes through the still air. I look from Firefly, his beautiful, glowing light and color gone from my sight, stolen with my black button eye, to Havoc. The rage and indignation on her face is truly terrifying.

Havoc is right, though: he cheated. I was to die, and yet the Spinster is the one on the ground, turning into dust. He killed her knowing that it could very well seal his fate. He killed her for me. My heart flutters at the sacrifice.

"Cheater! Cheater! Cheater!" Havoc hisses uncontrollably.

"Firefly," I croak out, fear and apprehension filling me. "You did—you didn't play the game fairly. W-what does this mean?" *Are we free? Does he take over Dreadmoor? Is he the new creator? Will he die?* There are many threads to consider when playing a game with the Spinster, but one thread was always consistent; You cheat, you die.

Firefly strides over to me, his hands gripping my face in a desperate embrace. "I don't know, and I don't care. I love you. Do you hear me? I love you," he urges. "I love you, Blue. I am *your* Firefly, never again the Boogeyman. Do you hear me, baby?"

"No!" Havoc shrieks, shoving Firefly away from me. "No touches! No loves! NO FIREFLY! Cheaters are punished!" She puts her fingers in her mouth as a loud whistle echoes around us, quickly followed by a high-pitched squeal and chittering noise. I knew that noise. The room shakes, a roar growing as the shadowy creature makes itself seen.

The Widow.

"Sick him!" Havoc commands the monstrous spider.

"No!" I cry out as the monster dives onto Firefly, pinning him to the ground. Firefly cries out as one of the Widow's dagger-like legs drives into his shoulder. I release a cry, gripping my own shoulder as the pain courses through me. "Havoc, please!" I beg her. "Stop this!"

“Cheaters are punished.” Havoc nods her head in satisfaction. “Butttt...” she taps her chin in thought before snapping her fingers. “Oh, Havoc has the BEST idea! To make things right again, Spider can take bug back to Nightmare. Dolly stays with Havoc for play time. Havoc loves dressing up dollies. So many changes!” She squeals with glee.

“No.” I shake my head.

“Bug must make things right, win fair and square, dolly.”

“Havoc!” Firefly rasps as the spider ties him in a web to drag him out of the room. “Let her go! You have me! Kill me, but let Blue go!”

“Havoc doesn’t want you!” She blows raspberries before looking back at me. “Havoc wants to see what makes dolly tick. Poke the guts. Needle and thread. Come now dolly, we have lots to explore.” I back away, glaring at her with all the hatred I have inside me.

“No, Havoc. Let us go. You have Dreadmoor. He and I will leave and never bother you again.”

Havoc’s smile falls as her eye twitches. “Come on, dolly. Don’t be a dumb—”

“No,” I shout firmly as her face darkens.

“No? Oh, tsk, tsk, dolly, dolly, dolly...” Havoc claps her hands excitedly. “This is so exciting for Havoc! Dolly says no with all the force! Means she’s serious. She demands meaning serious outcomes, yes? Serious outcomes... Serious outcomes...” Her human eye rolls as her head follows suit. “Dolly says no, so let's see what Boogeyman is made of.” She slips up next to me. “If Havoc guts him, will the bugs fall out?” she whispers.

“Stop!” I cry out as Havoc prepares to lunge on Firefly while he struggles against the webbing. “Please, no... Havoc, not him.” Havoc gives me an expectant look, and I know—*I know*—I have to make the choice; send him to Nightmare where he will be safe and stay here with Havoc to die, or fight her and we both die.

I give Firefly one last look, our eyes meeting, knowing there’s only one choice. I can’t let him die. I won’t. Despite the heartache, I love him. I was conned into lusting after the Boogeyman, but I fell in love with Firefly, and I won’t allow the one I love to be hurt.

“Don’t,” he orders, though it’s weak and desperate as he struggles against the webs. “Baby, don’t do this, I’ll fix this. I’m not losing you.”

“Cheaters and losers, one and the same. Cheaters are losers, never winning the game,” Havoc mutters,and I steel myself while staring at his desperate face.

“Blue,” he whispers as I force myself to look away facing Havoc, my eyes burning from crying. I can’t look at his pleading face anymore. If I do, I’ll break.

“Send him to Nightmare,” I state, my voice hollow. “I’m ready to

play your game, Havoc.”

Epilogue

Firefly

"Well?" I snap, waiting impatiently for one of them to fucking speak.

Charisma clears their throat. "The rumors of a hidden portal in the woods was," they stop looking at Sullen, "well, just that. Rumors." *Fuck!* I slam my fist against the table, taxidermy tools scattering across the floor. As I run my hands through my hair in frustration, I lick my lips, my eyes searching, trying to figure something, anything out. There's a solution; I know there's a solution to this. I'm just overlooking it.

"There's got to be another portal here somewhere! How else did the Spinster get her nightmares here? How did Havoc do it?" I run my hands down my scruffy face as I groan in exhaustion. My fingers part slightly as I stare down at the table, looking at the small stuffed creature before me. Pain begins to build in my side, the feeling of something hot piercing my flesh, causing me to cry out through my clenched teeth.

"Boss!" Charisma tries to rush to me, but I raise my hand, stopping them.

I glance down at my bare ribs, no wound or visible affliction present, yet I feel the pain.

Blue.

My hand grazes her name, still stitched perfectly across my heart. She's being tortured—again—and I'm feeling every bit of it, as I have every time since I was forced back to Nightmare. I need to get back to Dreadmoor, to save her and stop her pain, but *how*? The sensation returns, even more so this time. I groan loudly, slamming my fists into the table as I try to fight the pain, waiting for it to pass.

As much as I wish for the pain to end, it's also welcoming. It's the reminder I need that she's still alive, that she's still fighting, and despite the Spinster's attempts, we're still connected. I'll gladly share this pain with her. I won't let her go through this alone.

"Is it Blue again?" Charisma asks. Their affection towards the doll has changed since my return, which is oddly calming. I nod as they shake their head. "I knew Havoc was crazy, but I never imagined she

would do all of this."

No one did.

"Keep asking around," I exhale, wiping sweat from my forehead. "There has to be someone in this fucking world who knows something." Charisma nods as their eyes meet Sullen's.

"There may be someone we can ask." Sullen slithers from the shadows of the basement.

"Who?" I ask, retrieving the needle and thread before piercing the animal's fur.

"Stingy Jack." My body freezes, stiffening at the sound of that fucker's name. Charisma, sensing my rising anger, moves to intervene.

"Sullen—"

"Charisma, think about it. He has been here the longest, he knows all the portals. He was the first in Nightmare to discover a way out. If anyone can get you back to Dreadmoor, boss, it's Stingy Jack."

The two minions wait for my decision. The last person I want to ask for help is Stingy Jack, but for Blue, I will do anything. I take a long breath before nodding.

"Alright, arrange a meeting." Sullen nods, slithering back to the shadows.

"You don't have to do this, boss. We'll keep trying to find another way."

I stare at the dead rodent in my hands, his body almost fully intact, with a fresh set of button eyes, one black and one blue. "There's no other way, Charisma."

Stay strong, Blue. I'm going to fix everything, baby, I promise.

Charisma nods, leaving me alone in the basement of her home, just me and Mr. Whiskers.

"Firefly," I hear her whisper in the quiet air as a dragonfly lands on the rat, changing from green to blue. A smirk forms on my face as I continue to stare at its wings.

Don't worry, dollface, I'm coming for you.

POEM 2

My existence had returned to my name,
My stitches stolen and my heart a flame.
The light of his life had left this world,
Leaving me in the remnants of chaos.
Here I am once again, alone and blue,
The game only just beginning and new.

POEM 3

In the dark of Nightmare, they will rise,
But Bug lost his dolly with the pretty eyes.
So many twists but the dice are thrown,
Havoc's game begins, and fear is sown.

Don't worry little reader, Havoc likes her dollies alive when we play games.